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"ST. CLAIR WAS MAKING A MEDALLION OF HER HEAD."

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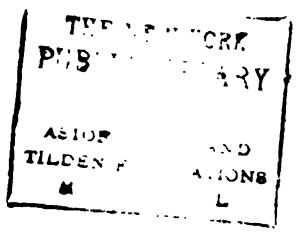

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ASTOR AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
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Author's Definitive Edition

DR. NORTH AND HIS FRIENDS

BY

S. WEIR MITCHELL, M.D.
LL.D. HARVARD AND EDINBURGH

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THE CENTURY CO.
1910

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ASTOR, LENOX AND
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TO

HORACE HOWARD FURNESS

WITH EVER PLEASANT MEMORIES

OF

MANY YEARS OF FRIENDSHIP

DR. NORTH AND HIS FRIENDS

DR. NORTH AND HIS FRIENDS

I

EARLY in the summer, five years after my marriage with Alice Leigh, my friend Clayborne moved into the country. This step surprised all of our little circle. He had said nothing about it, and on our return from our holiday we learned, for the first time, of this amazing change. I say amazing, because the great scholar liked company of his own choosing, and the move thus made was sure to deprive him of the occásional visits of many whom he was well pleased to see. He explained his action by the statement that he desired to have more leisure to complete his work on the Mohammedan sects, which was now nearing a conclusion. We, his friends, were not well pleased to have this familiar resort so far removed, nor were we quite satisfied with his reasons for this radical alteration in his mode of life.

He had in the past lacked neither will nor way to secure to himself the solitude in which thought matures. When he had been of a mind to be alone we respected the least hint of such intention, and none of us, except St. Clair, ventured to intrude. As to

this indulged favorite, Clayborne said grimly, "One cannot make laws for kittens."

We of course discussed among ourselves this change of residence, which seemed to us to involve so much, but soon ceased to criticize, being sure that our friend must, as usual, have competent reasons for so great an alteration in his mode of life. Moreover, we were not given to that excess of gossip about friends or relatives which is common. Vincent especially disliked such debates. We decided that, at all events, Clayborne's change of home must not be allowed to lessen the freedom of relation which had come to mean so much for all concerned. And yet as some of us were very busy people, Clayborne's move did at times render inconvenient the claim he never ceased to make on the men and women who were dear to him.

St. Clair had just before this time returned from wandering in the East Indies. Nothing unusual in the lives of men surprised him. He laughed when he heard of Clayborne's change of residence, and said it was well, and that perhaps now he would learn to tell a pine from a hemlock; and did Mrs. Vincent know why he had chosen the country, for which he had a frequently declared want of taste?

Mrs. Vincent shook her head at this, and declined to express an opinion. She knew no more than we, but had a well-understood weakness as to being supposed to know more of Clayborne than the rest of us. This was at times a source of annoyance to my wife.

Vincent thought that the scholar had been wise, and that all men when growing old should escape from

cities, because age is irritable, and some limitation of human contact becomes therefore desirable. As Clayborne liked nothing better than a bitter feud with other scholars, and, failing this, a tangled lawsuit, the explanation did not seem to me to assist our quest after reasonably explanatory motives.

When I told Mrs. Vincent that Clayborne had bought his new home two years before he moved into it, she remarked, with an air of gentle dejection: "And he never told me. Did he tell Alice?" This was my wife. Fortunately I was able to say "No," and that he had altered the house and had the garden put in order nearly a year ago. "And never mentioned it?"

"No; certainly not to me. He may have told Fred Vincent; as his counsel, he may very likely have done so."

"I shall ask him why he was so mysterious," said she, decisively. I was very sure that she would do nothing of the kind.

We ourselves had returned to the city early in the autumn. Clayborne called at once, and then it was that, for the first time, we learned of the new home, for, as I have said, he had been silent as to the matter, and, I fancy, rather enjoyed the completeness of our surprise. He bade us to come out any afternoon and see his house. We must arrange to come with the Vincents, he added, and with no more words he left us.

"I did want to ask him so many questions," said my wife.

We drove to Holmwood of a delightful afternoon,

into a neighborhood somewhat unfamiliar, to me at least. As we reached the house Clayborne was in the act of mounting for his daily ride. He turned back much pleased, and with the eager joy of a child showed us over the house and garden, loading Mrs. Vincent and my wife with autumn flowers. The drawing-room was still without furniture. Mrs. Vincent was to furnish it, he told her. A wise arrangement; her taste was perfect. My wife said: "How delightful, Anne! We must talk it over together." "Certainly, dear"; but I, who am sometimes wise, knew this talk would never occur, or, if it did, would never have materially influential results.

These two women loved each other sincerely, but were inclined to feed, with fractional opportunities, the reserve of half-concealed jealousy they felt as to Clayborne. At one time, years before, Mrs. Vincent did not like him, then she endured him, and at last was conquered by his honest qualities and his devotion to Frederick Vincent. My wife had always liked him.

We remained an hour, and as we were leaving Clayborne insisted that we should dine with him every Saturday, or at least while the autumn weather made the little journey agreeable. To this we willingly assented. "I have some queer people to show you by and by," he said; "some of my neighbors and others. You have always wanted a round table; now, my dear ladies, I have one."

We had a glad welcome at that first dinner. He was particular about his diet, and had the peculiarity of giving but one wine during the dinner. It might

be a Burgundy, a claret, or a vintage champagne, but we were given no other until, after our good old fashion, the cloth was removed and the decanters of Madeira were set on the well-rubbed mahogany table. Vincent and I had often remonstrated with our friend on his disregard of the tastes of his guests. He replied that the Jews had the sense not to mix wines when they drank. Vincent remarked that a too generous use of texts would probably leave us neither drink nor diet, and certainly would forbid champagne. We did not change Clayborne's ways, and he continued, I do not know why, to limit us to the one wine he that day fancied. At table he talked very little, but knew well how to keep going the talk of others. Now and then he could be teased into strenuous gusts of talk, though rarely into the merry give and take of lighter chat. When by good luck in this more companionable mood he was the best table-comrade I ever knew, although since then I have sat beside Lowell and George Meredith, and dined often with one great bishop, who, when at his best, was a brilliant companion.

But it was after dining, when we had wandered into the great library, that Clayborne was most happy. It had long been understood that Anne Vincent and my wife should share with us the pleasant privilege of this easy digestive hour. Here in the great book-lined room we chatted in groups, or were free to wander in this home of learning, to look at the latest additions, or to comment on the last new water-color left on the table for St. Clair's stringent criticisms. Soon or late we were sure to settle down

about the blazing hickory logs. The coffee and liqueurs were left on a side-table, pipe or cigar was lighted, and we talked or were silent, as suited the after-dinner mood of each.

I had been respectfully and temperately amused during this first dinner by a slight discussion which arose as to the furnishing of the drawing-room, confided to Anne Vincent's taste. Clayborne had himself some indistinct appreciation of the fact that he was looked upon as the legitimate prey of two unusual women. He liked it. He had always been happy in friendship and luckless in love, and this I believe to be common. In middle age he began, as St. Clair once said, to collect a variety of friendships, and gave up all effort to find a domestic partner. His two women friends constantly advised marriage; but, as Vincent said, this advice was given for self-justification alone, and meant nothing. In fact, although, as I have observed, Mrs. Vincent and my wife were jealous of each other, they were ready, with childlike absence of self-analysis, to unite forces against any other woman who seemed desirous of sharing in the task of looking after Clayborne's comfort. Men are rarely jealous as to their friends; women are often thus when the friends are men, and sometimes when they are women: but this latter is a vice of youth. I am not sure that to be capable of controlled jealousy is not a needful qualification for both love and friendship.

As we came out from dinner Vincent and his wife and I settled down with our host near to the fire; St. Clair and Mrs. North wandered about the room.

She had come hither by an earlier train, and had busied herself in decorating the library with great branches of gloriously tinted maple and oak. At the hearth-side there was silence awhile, for here we felt free to say nothing when we were so disposed.

St. Clair said to my wife: "Why do you bring all this autumn splendor out of the woods to shrivel in a hot room?"

"Why not?" she asked.

"Why not? It was alive on its slow, beautiful, changeful way to nature's death."

My wife never quite admitted the honesty of some of St. Clair's fancies. "Why," said she, "do you air these affectations before us who know you? Now, is it not pure affectation?"

"I thank the affectations of life that I know at least one woman who never allows a flower to be cut in her garden."

"And who is she?"

"As if I would tell you! The next thing would be her conversion to brutal common—very, very common—sense. A word of surprise would—well, would change her."

"Then she must be rather weak. I am sorry that any woman should be so foolish."

"Thank God for the fools!" he returned. "What were life without them? There is no promise of wisdom in another world. That is a comfort. There will, I trust, be a few fool-angels. No, as I live, I am never affected. I am impulsive, excessive; I represent in extremes what I am sure you feel, must feel. The next time you cut a great lily, think, think!

Do you like to see a noble tree fall, ruined by the ax? It gives you a pang. Oh, it does!"

"Yes, it does."

"Well, what of the lily? All deaths are horrible to me. I never got over the scene in that hospital with North. He said death was common. So said *Hamlet's* stepfather, but I doubt if that comforted the melancholy prince, or any heart before or since. No one really believes in death; I do not. I suppose you think that nonsense."

"I do. But as to the oak. It is centuries old, all manner of romance surrounds its life. If I were a poet I could—oh, how hard to be unable to answer fitly!"

"Then let me help, and answer, too, for oak and lily. No, it is not my verse.

> It is not growing like a tree
> In bulk, doth make Man better be;
> Or standing long an oak, three hundred year,
> To fall a log at last, dry, bald, and sear:
> A lily of a day
> Is fairer far in May,
> Although it fall and die that night—
> It was the plant and flower of Light.
> In small proportions we just beauty see;
> And in short measures life may perfect be."

"You have no right to call in other folks to help you to say things; and yet the verse was worth while. Thank you. It is not unfamiliar. I forgive and believe you. But as you are an avowed vegetarian since

you came home, what of—say the cabbages cut for dinner?"

"Oh, they are ugly."

"So is Clayborne," she said, pointing with her fan. He was of a grand, nobly rugged type of ugliness. "Would that make it a less crime to do for him as some of his critics would desire?"

"I hate argument," he replied.

"But this is illustration."

"Oh, I hate illustration. Did you see the new edition of my book of poems? The illustrations were—I always see the illustrations now. They have killed my ideal people in the drama, and set in their place lay figures. Illustrations never illustrate."

As Clayborne and Vincent at the fireside were smoking in entire silence, I carried my cigar across the library, to where my wife's laughter called me.

"A laugh is always a riddle," I said. "What is amusing you, Alice?"

"We were discussing illustrations. But I was just now laughing at the way Mr. St. Clair wriggled out of an absurd proposition. On the whole I agree with him in his dislike of the illustrations in well-known books, and yet," she added, turning to him, "there is something more to be said. Remember how the great masters have illustrated the Bible stories. When I think of the Virgin it is the tender figure of Del Sarto's 'Annunciation' I see. And then there is the Christ of the Brera, Da Vinci's. That does help one to realize the Christus. I think—I am sure that face has done much good, has helped many. I once saw

a grave, middle-aged officer stand long before that picture. He walked away in tears."

"You are right," returned St. Clair; "but oil-paintings are not in my sense illustrations. I might urge also the fact that even the great artists have sometimes hurt, rather than helped, our appreciation of some of the most beautiful of the Bible stories. Ideals are tender things; one has to be careful. But we were really talking of the books of to-day. As to helpful illustration of the Bible, no modern man seems to be competent. These fables you good people so lightly accept—"

"Stop, please," said my wife; "you know our agreement. You are on forbidden ground."

"I step off it," he said gently. "Pardon the trespasser."

"Thank you; but tell me, was it that the great painters honestly believed with a faith unmatched to-day?"

"No; they were a most dissolute lot, those old fellows; some had no more belief than Filippo Lippi. They painted for priest, pope, or prince, to order, and were paid, as I was for my last book or statue."

My wife paused in thought for a moment, and said: "Work is none the worse because men pay for it. But it was not money which gave them something the world has missed ever since. You say they had no faith, or at least that some of the greatest had no more than has many an artist to-day. Why, then, were they so great?"

"I will tell you," he replied. "It was because they were both poets and artists. Certainly the greatest

were poets. Who is this to-day? What artist—Rossetti; yes. But who else? Who else writes poetry? These men did: Da Vinci, Raphael, and Michael the Archangel, who was the Milton of painters. I do not say a deep faith would not have gone for something. No doubt some of them had it at times; but now art has neither faith nor poetry, and imagination in art is dead—dead."

"And yet two years ago you saw the future of all art in the Church of Rome. You meant to become a monk. You tried it."

"I did, for three weeks. They were dirty. I left."

"Three weeks was pretty long. You are like a bird. Every bough is good for a while; then the wind swings it and away you go."

St. Clair tossed up his hands in mirthful protest. "Alas for the limitations of friendship! Let us join those by the fire. The room is cold, and we are on the way to a minor quarrel. Only my sweet temper saved us. How is the girl?"

"She is four years old to-day. You have not seen her for a week, and I told you then of her birthday. Will you kindly explain that, sir?" When at home he rarely passed a day without seeing the child.

"I was very busy," he said; "my best workman got himself married; I was busy."

"Ah, my dear Mr. St. Clair," cried the indignant mother, "your life is punctuated with excuses!"

"How cruel you are! I shall come to-morrow. I have two Indian dolls for the maid, and a Thibet shawl for you. Only don't abuse me. What is Mrs. Vincent saying?"

"You are a delightful man," said my wife. "I always accept practical excuses. Let us go and hear Anne Vincent. I think she must be rousing Mr. Clayborne; I have not heard his voice this half-hour."

We went across the room and found places at the fireside. Mrs. Vincent had, as we learned, just announced a Frenchwoman's dictum as to conversation. She said: "I saw in a very unpleasant book yesterday what a Frenchwoman said of conversation; she thought there would be only silence if gossip, scandal, the fatuous and commonplace were left out of social talk."

"She was right," said Clayborne, through a cloud of smoke.

"Let us accept her proposition," said Vincent, "and talk scandal, gossip, and commonplace, and fine any one a dollar who says any intelligent thing."

"But," said Mrs. Vincent, "I forbid gossip."

"And I scandal," cried my wife.

"Then," laughed St. Clair, "we are reduced to the commonplace—"

"And fatuous," I added.

"Well, begin, one of you. It should be easy," smiled Clayborne.

There was a long silence.

"Commonplaces seem to exact a good deal of thinking," laughed Mrs. Vincent.

"No," said Clayborne; "they imply absence of thought. And we fail because we are all thinking, which is quite uncommon."

"One dollar gone," cried I. "Try it again."

The poet said, with the tone of one conducting a party of tourists: "The Venus of Milo is universally acknowledged to be the most beautiful of statues."

"Stuff!" said Clayborne; "it is not Venus, and the Japanese consider it a quite brutal type."

"Pay up," said St. Clair, overjoyed.

"There is no such thing as universally indubitable commonplace," said my wife; "it is a question of time and people. You had best begin by defining it."

"It does not exist as a noun in the old dictionaries. 'To commonplace is to reduce to general heads,' says Johnson. The trite, stale, and hackneyed is a more modern definition," said Clayborne. "We seem to be sadly incompetent. Commonplace—well, that is something any one can say and any one can understand. There is Tupper, a forgotten name, and Walt Whitman; my second definition covers their trash."

"Ah, now," cried St. Clair, "my good old poet Walt!"

Clayborne sat up alert. "He was neither poet nor —confound our tongue! I want to revive an old word—nor proser. He was so vain that he had no power of self-criticism. No man is great who has lost power to be self-critical. I asked him once if he thought Shakespeare as great a poet as he himself. He said he had often considered that question, and had never been able to make up his mind."

"Oh, but he was jesting," said Mrs. Vincent.

"No, not at all," said I. "I, too, knew him well. He was matchless in his vanity. He had the courage of his vanity. Very few strong people are fearless

enough to tell you their honest self-estimate. The poets have been decently shy about that. One would like to know where Wordsworth and Shelley ranked themselves in the peerage of genius."

"Tell us more about Walt Whitman," said Mrs. Vincent. "He must have been anything but commonplace."

"I will tell you something," said I. "He consulted a physician, a friend of mine, some time ago. When about to leave, well pleased with advice to live out of doors and to take no physic, he asked what he was to give as a fee. The doctor said: 'The debt was paid long ago; it is you who are still the creditor.' Walt rose up, with his great head like that of the Capitoline Jove, and saying, 'Thank you; good morning,' went out of the room as a stout lady entered. A moment later he reappeared, without knocking, set two large hands on the table opposite to the doctor, and said, 'That, sir, I call poetry!'"

"How pretty!" cried Mrs. Vincent. "But what did the stout lady say?"

"I asked that very question. She said, when Walt had gone, 'Is the gentleman insane?' The doctor said 'Yes'; as he was a poet he was of course cracked at times, and that his name was Walt Whitman. The stout lady was the head of a school. She declared that although his books were not for young ladies, she wished she had known his name in time to ask for an autograph. The doctor consoled her with a note of Walt Whitman's."

"Do they still bother you for autographs, Clayborne?" said Vincent.

"Yes, now and then. I use the stamps, and tear up their letters."

"And never answer them?" said my wife. "Never?"

"Yes, I did once. A persistent young woman wrote to me three times, and in a rage I answered her at last. I wrote:

> What can a wise man do but laugh
> At fools who ask an autograph?

That is the only poetry I ever wrote."

"But she got what she asked for?" said St. Clair.

"No," growled Clayborne; "my secretary wrote it."

"I consider that cruel," said my wife.

"Unkind, she said it was, and then declared, to my surprise, that she was a far-away New England cousin, and that I might have been contented to make no reply, and that she would trouble me no more."

"This being her fourth letter," said I.

"Yes. I suppose that if you were written to once a week as to something you had no mind to do, at some time the request would find you in the mood to say yes."

"That," said I, "is the principle of fly-fishing, of making love, and of advertising."

"And of success in life," said Vincent. "Persevere and change your fly."

"She persevered," said Clayborne.

"And," said Mrs. Vincent, "she found, poor thing, that it was a wicked shark, and not a well-mannered salmon."

"But after? What came next?" said my wife, smiling.

"Nothing, I am sure," returned Anne Vincent. "What should or could come, my dear child?"

"A dozen six-button gloves to one that it did not end there."

"I take it, my dear!"

"Good!" said my wife. "Mr. Clayborne wrote her a nice long letter."

"I did; but who told you?"

"No one!" cried Mrs. North, triumphantly.

We laughed, while Mrs. Vincent stared in the fire, reflective.

"Six buttons," said Mrs. North.

"She was a poor little cripple," added Clayborne, "who was trying to get some education at home out of books, and with a faint, far-away interest in the cousin who wrote books. Now I send no smart answers."

"Was it costly, that autograph?" asked St. Clair.

Clayborne made no reply.

Mrs. Vincent shook her head at the poet by way of warning.

I happened to know that Clayborne's care of this girl began four years before he moved to the country. He gave her the chance of education which the girl craved, and now this was the slightly deformed young woman who had but lately come to live in the village, and who came daily to receive her cousin's dictations and to type-write his letters.

When Clayborne failed to reply, St. Clair knew himself to have been reproved, and lapsed into

silence, dismayed like a child. My wife, who had a motherly regard for her abdicated lovers, smiled, and murmured under shelter of her fan: "Did not you know? The girl is the new secretary, Miss Maywood, the young woman we saw in the hall last week."

"How stupid of me!" said St. Clair, aside. "But why should not one speak of another man's bounty? If hidden, it loses its value as an example. Your Bible texts are in conflict. 'Let your light so shine before men,' and then you are given the text about the desirable ignorance of the hand."

"Let us ask Mr. Clayborne," said my wife. "He knows the Bible as few know it."

The general talk had lapsed. The hospitality of silence was one of the charms of this house, and indeed, as I have said, had come to be an accepted freedom whenever we met. It was broken by my wife's question. The scholar looked up with the rare smile he always had ready for those whom he loved.

"Charity, dear lady, is but one of the illuminating virtues which make life to shine. A man's light is not charity. His light is the radiating influence of a good and true life. The text should not be read as inviting to liberality when giving in church. It means nothing there in the way of example. No one knows what you give, or why, which is of far more moment."

"Thank you for the better interpretation," said my wife.

"It is," said Mrs. Vincent, "the other text as to that ignorant left hand which has always puzzled me."

I saw my wife's face light up as it does when thought surprises her with some of its strange revealments. She said with a certain quiet timidity, as if in doubt: "Is there not, Anne, an intimation in the text that giving should be, as it were, a part of the unrecording automatism of a well-trained life, without self-ful sense of good done—something as simple and natural as breathing?"

"But surely, Alice," said Anne Vincent, "you do not mean that we should give without thought? No, pardon me, dear! I was stupid. I see what you mean, but you were hardly clear."

Clayborne looked over at my wife with his large, slow, kindly smile.

"It seems to me clear enough," he said.

"No," said my wife; "I never can express what I mean. Sometimes I think I am clever, but when I talk it out I conclude that I am a fool. Tell me what I mean."

"I think," said the scholar, "you mean that the single act of giving should be merely the easy outcome of a habit formed, like a rut in a road, by endless repetitions. It does not involve absence of considerate thought. It is, it should be, thus of all our virtues. It should be as with our garments, which we used to call habits. Any abrupt change in the habits of the mind should bring to us an awakening sense of awkwardness, of something wrong, and so stay us with self-question."

"I knew he would say it better than I," said my wife.

"Ah!" murmured St. Clair; "habits of the body;

garments of the mind to be acquired. I have none, thank goodness! Now I know why I hate to wear a hat or clothes. But go on. It was tremendously like a sermon, except that it was brief, and that the privilege to interrupt was permissible."

"But should not be," said Vincent.

"Oh, I suppose not," returned St. Clair. "When I snap at Clayborne or growl at his dignified attitude of big dog, I am, as you all appear to think, like the little dog Beaver. In fact, Clayborne does sometimes talk astonishing nonsense."

Clayborne smiled. "We don't know the dog Beaver."

"Well, then, here is wisdom. Once on a time, when the Rebs were marching on Gettysburg, they passed a house close to the road. On the porch stood a child and her mother. A tiny terrier safe behind the paling-fence barked furiously at the soldiers. Beaver was the name of that loyal dog. Beaver refused to behave himself. Then at last came General A—— and rode on the sidewalk. At this liberty the small dog ran to and fro, and barked yet more angrily. Upon this the general heard the child cry out in alarm, 'Oh, mama, mama! Don't let Beav bite that army!' Well, I am Beaver."

"Thank you," said I; "you have not lived in vain."

"What a delightful story!" said Anne Vincent.

"It has large applications," said her husband. "May I use it, Victor?"

"I never patent my stories," said St. Clair. "Will the army please to move on?"

"Oh," said Clayborne, "I was only about to ask

when the offertory first came into use. How was the bag filled—the bag which Judas carried? Is not that a Christian custom? I never saw it in a mosque. Do the Jews use it?"

No one could answer his questions, but Vincent said: "It seems a natural and easy way of collecting money for church uses. I never liked it. That may be my Quaker ancestry. I believe Friends have not this custom."

"I am with you as to this," said my wife. "I, too, dislike it. We are nearly all descendants of Quakers, and no one of us can answer this simple question."

Said our host: "I will sometime invite my neighbor Randolph to join us. Then you can ask him."

"Do," said I.

"When," said Clayborne, "St. Clair dislocated the talk, I was reflecting where I had seen some Eastern sayings about charity. Generally some one has said in the past whatever we say to-day, and often has said it better."

"That seems acceptably commonplace," laughed St. Clair, "and how easily that disposes of all need to talk! I do not see why we should not dispense with original conversation and talk in quotations."

"Our friend Anne Lyndsay might, or you," said Mrs. Vincent. "The rest of us, except Mr. Clayborne, would be silent listeners."

I ventured to say that there would be long pauses.

"If Clayborne," said Vincent, who at times was literal, "means that some things have been so said in the past that we cannot put them better, it is hardly

true. As man changes and society alters, so does the need to restate emotion or repeat the great truths in some novel form. Otherwise what need to preach sermons or write books?"

"There is no need," said St. Clair.

"No one needs sermons more than a certain friend of ours," said Mrs. Vincent, "and he does also write books."

"But as to sermons, three words answer for me. When my dear Mrs. Vincent says, 'Don't do it,' it is enough, as you know. I repent and stop. But here comes Clayborne."

The scholar had been wandering about among his books, and now came back with two little volumes beautifully bound, and a manuscript in Arabic rolled on an ivory rod. "I wanted," he said, "to find some Eastern sayings about charity." As he spoke he unrolled the script. "These are the poems of El-Din-Attar, the friend of Omar Khayyam; the book is rare." He began to translate. "He says: 'Listen with the two ears given thee of Allah. Cover thy face when thou givest alms, that he who receives may know only Allah beneath thy cloak. He who giveth moon-white silver at night is repaid with the gold of the sun at morning.' 'These,' says El-Din-Attar, 'are not my wisdom, but were made by the sufi poet El-Amin.' The added comment is not bad, and is apropos—I should say relevant: 'That which hath been already said is like thy dinner of dates of yesterday. Shall it withhold thee from eating thy dates to-morrow?' Then he goes on, as he thinks, to improve on El-Amin: 'The fool thinks that he gives

He is only honestly returning to Allah that which he gave. Give without words.'

A gift is as the young foal of the camel;
It should carry nothing on its back.
A gift is as an egg; what gain to decorate the shell?

Here is a bit of verse, with apologies to St. Clair. This is from my little collection of Arabic, or rather of Oriental, morsels of wisdom—what Attar calls, with gentle vanity, 'crumbs from the loaf of my wisdom.' All poets are vain."

"Ah, to own the entire loaf!" said St. Clair. "As to the vanity of poets—the great poets are never vain. But we will talk of that some day. Now for your poem."

"Oh, it is only four lines, and, after all, some things do seem to drop readily into verse.

When thou givest to the poor
Be thou ever sure,
As thy share,
To ask large usury of prayer."

"I do not like that," said Mrs. Vincent. "Why ask any return?"

"Well, here is an odd one. This is Malayan:

It is not always the receiver who receives;
It is not always the giver who gives."

"Oh, I like that much better!" cried my wife.

"They are really very interesting," said St. Clair

"The phrase as to asking the usury of prayer verbally reminds me of the sonnet of a friend of mine. I think it is on a lost philopena. I am not sure that I can repeat it. Yes; this is it:

More blest is he who gives than who receives,
For he that gives doth always something get:
Angelic usurers that interest set:
And what we give is like the cloak of leaves
Which to the beggared earth the great trees fling,
Thoughtless of gain in chilly autumn days:
The mystic husbandry of nature's ways
Shall fetch it back in greenery of the spring.
One tender gift there is, my little maid,
That doth the giver and receiver bless,
And shall with obligation none distress:
Coin of the heart in God's just balance weighed;
Therefore, sweet spendthrift, still be prodigal,
And freely squander what thou hast from all."

"How much is gained by rhythm and rhyme!" said my wife. "I like your sonnet."

"What else have you?" said St. Clair.

"Here is one for Mrs. Vincent. Again it is El-Din-Attar. But the translation is not mine:

Give as the peach-trees give in the oasis of Sevol-Nedrag —the grace of the blossom, the sweet of the fruit, shade for the sun-hurt, rest for the wanderer, that he may hear the wind in the branches over him calling to prayer, and thus refreshed, may return to his home and plant trees by the wells and the wayside. For a good deed hath length of life; and who shall number the years of remembrance?"

"I like that best," said my wife; "how to give with grace, how to flavor your gift."

"You have small need to learn that, dear lady," said our host. It was true. Clayborne grew gentler as he became older; but direct praise he rarely gave. My wife flushed and was silent. Clayborne was vaguely conscious of a kindly indiscretion. He went on hastily: "These bits of Eastern wisdom lose much in the translation."

"I myself like," said my wife, "the thought that an act of goodness may live on and on. You recall, Owen, what J—— F—— said to you when he was dying?"

"Yes."

"Tell it, please. Here surely you may."

"You will greatly oblige me, Owen, if you will tell it," said Vincent. "You once did begin to tell me, but something interrupted you." He asked it with what I might call the tender formality of manner I knew and liked.

I hesitated a moment. My wife had revived a sad memory. Then I said: "If you wish it. My friend was dying of cancer, of that one of its forms which is the most terrible to a man of refinement, like my friend, who desired with every instinct of a gentleman to be agreeable to all about him. He wrote me: 'Come to W—— and see me. Come soon. I want to say good-by. I am being tortured to death. I am disgusting to myself and to all who approach me. It is agony and insult. I should not have said insult, but I leave it as said. Come, and soon; I have something to say.' I went. He had set nine

in the morning as the hour for my call. He explained this early appointment, saying: 'I am given morphia. It merely dulls the pain. I wanted to see you when my head is clear, and for this reason I have taken none since last night. I am in great pain. But I wanted to say this to you. When my dear friend, your sister, was dying, after years of patiently borne pain, and I spoke of her cheerfulness, she said to me: "When I recall the calm endurance shown in my brother's illness (he died at nineteen, during service in the Civil War), I am somehow made strong, and can go on." I myself,' said F——, 'was then well and sturdy. Now,—and I must talk briefly,—I want only to say to you that the remembrance of her example has been to me in turn a constant help. I knew that you would like to hear that her long years of trial were not without some good results.' Then he said, 'That is all. Please to go now! Good-by!'"

For a little while no one spoke. Then St. Clair said: "Horrible! I should end it quickly. I hate pain. I am never ill. I wonder if pain exists outside of this world. I like that man of whom Owen told us, who could not feel pain. Do not talk of it any more. Let me tell you an Eastern story about charity. If you talk about death I shall sleep none to-night; I shall go away. I heard my tale in the market at Tangier from a man who taught me a little of the Berber language."

"Is this honest, Victor?" said our host.

"All poets are."

"Lord! they have contributed more to the annals of unpunished villainy than—"

"Well, then, I won't tell it," broke in St. Clair, annoyed. "Personally I like to be wicked, and I do not mind being put in a corner for it; but just now I am not bad. I hate to be whipped for the sins of my betters."

"What stuff!" said Clayborne. "Go on!"

"Don't mind him, Victor," said Vincent.

"Please," said Mrs. Vincent.

St. Clair laughed and threw back his head, which was like that of a young Greek. "I shall tell Mrs. Vincent."

"And we will not listen," said I.

He rose and stood by the fire, at one side, was silent a moment, and then said:

"The Caliph Haroun-al-Raschid went out one night basely clad. Because he was a sufi poet he knew how to become for an hour whatsoever he would. This time he made himself hungry and friendless and in sore need, for now there dwelt in him the mind of a beggar. He bent low and asked alms at the gate of the mosque. An old man gave him a *paraf*. 'I thank thee,' said Haroun, 'although it is the least of all coins. But tell me thy name, that when the muezzin calls at morning I may pray for thee to the Father of gifts.' 'Charity hath no name,' said he who gave. Thus speaking, he went his way. Others refused to give, and some mocked him. At last came a young man. 'Help me; I am poor!' said Haroun. 'I, too, have nothing,' returned the man. 'Even my verses are poor. I am a sufi poet, a maker of songs.' 'Give me, then, at least a song,' said the caliph; 'that is little.' 'Here is one,' replied the poet. At this the caliph forgot and drew himself up to his full height. Seeing

him thus in the moonlight the young man knew him, and said in haste, 'Here is a better song,' and giving him a scroll took back that he had given. Then said Haroun: 'I am the caliph. Come to me at morning without fail, and if the verse be good it shall profit thee, and if bad thou shalt suffer.'"

"By George!" said Clayborne, "a fine way to deal with poets."

"Or historians," said I. "Go on, Victor."

"When the man came at morning and the caliph unrolled the scroll it was a song of his own. 'Young man,' he said, 'you are too wise for a poet,' and made him governor of Bagdad."

"That is either reasonably well imitated," said Clayborne, "or a real Oriental story. I never can tell. Perhaps you may like to know, Victor, that the reigning royal house of Othman has given to Turkey some of its best poets. But where did you get that tale? At Tangier, I think you said."

"Yes; did you really think I made it?"

"By all the Muses, I do not know," said Clayborne. "Write it for me, then I can tell: when it is on paper I can tell."

"Can you, indeed? You shall have it," replied St. Clair, smiling.

"Oh, the bad boy!" murmured Vincent to me.

Before I could answer, my wife said: "I have had what my girl calls 'a *dood* time.' Come, Owen, or we shall be late for the train. We are also too late for—what was it Mr. Clayborne promised last week at our house? Oh, yes. You said there was no text on which a sermon could not be written."

"Yes, I recall it," said Clayborne. "It was to be ready to-night. St. Clair and I were each to write a sermon on it."

"The text we gave you," said Mrs. Vincent, "was, I remember, 'Jesus wrote on the ground.'"

"Good, I shall try; I lacked for time."

"I myself think it is too easy," said St. Clair.

"Indeed! Do make haste, Owen; we are late," and so with this we went away.

II

TWO weeks or more went by before we dined again at Holmwood. Meanwhile Vincent was in Washington, convincing the Supreme Court. St. Clair had disappeared, with no more apparent sense of need to explain why than a ghost at the end of a brief earthly call. At times he forgot engagements, neglected any one who might be sitting for bust or medallion, and simply went away. No one knew where he had been until his return, unless he wrote to Mrs. Vincent or to my wife. Once he asked me to go with him, and what he did and what I saw I may find time to state. When on this present occasion he thus flitted he went up to the head waters of the Delaware River, bought a canoe, and paddled himself down the great stream to Lewes. There on the sea-shore he dried his canoe and set it afire. I asked him why. He said Mrs. North knew, but I did not. How could I, indeed? My good wife declared she was, in fact, no wiser than I. St. Clair insists to this day that she knows it, and it may be that she does. It seems to me stupid to add needlessly to the mysteries of life; but this he liked to do.

When, being curious, I asked Mrs. Vincent, she said, "You men are queer people, and yet I read you his letter."

Now, this was his letter. It did not assist me.

"DEAR MADAM SUMMER [he said this was her true name, because of her naturalness of bounty]: I am on the edge of a wood. A cat-bird, astray from his home, is playing at imitating the wood-robins. They listen surprised and insulted. Not far below is a rapid. I am writing on a moldered log. The rapid above is talking to the rapid below, because it is just after sundown, when the waters acquire speech. All day long they babble, but far into the night they sing or talk with the tongues of many lands. Who has not heard or cannot hear them had better stay among men, for the great forests have never given him their freedom. There are three frogs in the marsh; one has a drum, one a fife, and one a bassoon. The air is full of leafy funerals. The waters are carrying the red and yellow leaves in fleets to the sea. Here alone is death beautiful. I float all day long on this generous river. I have only to keep the prow straight; the strong-willed water has the flow of decisive fate. I go past the homes of men, past mills and pastures, where the herds, with heads all one way, graze with patient eyes. Here and there are primeval woods, where I camp under the stars or wander. Do you think any church is as solemn as a slowly darkening wood? Where else have you the dreamy sense of something about to happen? What is it seems to follow you? A gentle terror makes you glad to get out to the verge of the river. All woods are haunted. You are tempted by mysterious longings to return again. You know, dear lady, how the need to be alone seizes me at times. I wonder how long Adam was alone. That was a noble loneliness, the finest the world ever gave. Eve was a doubtful gift. To be alone restores my sense of being only one person. I sometimes think that by chance or design several souls get stowed away in this single lodging-house we call the body. Who the landlord is at times it

were hard to tell. Here I own myself. Not to want to be at times alone is a signal of commonplace identity. Alone we are nearest to God. You think I am a trifler as to religion. You are wrong. None of you is as deeply religious as I am. You are wrong. Ah, I am so good when I am in the woods! Yes, at my best. VICTOR.

"P. S. I forgot. Years have I spent in the woods, and to-day saw a thing new to me. To see it makes me happy. I must tell some one.

"When leaves drop in the autumn they fall face down, as if to salute the great mother. It is true of nearly all leaves when the air is still. But why is it so? I can see you smile, well pleased. I leave you to guess. I sat to-day a long while watching the leaves fall. I think I know now why they do not come to earth in the position they hold while on the tree. V. ST. C."

When Mrs. Vincent had read thus far I told her that it was a large dose of St. Clair's enigmatic, half-meant nonsense, and that on his return from these woodland conversions to goodness he was sure to plunge into outrageous ways, and to need all of us to get him back to a reasonably decorous life. Mrs. Vincent, who liked no one but herself to scold him, said he had the fire of genius, and that much was to be forgiven an unrestrained nature; to which I returned that there was no insurance against the fire of genius, and that other folks were apt to get a trifle singed. Upon this we quarreled mildly, and I was coolly received for a week or two, and had to send flowers and generally make myself gracious. I was generous enough not to tell her that St. Clair bought, on his return, a charming picture by Rousseau, for

which he could as easily pay as fly. When Clayborne heard of this extravagance he went to the dealer and paid for it. As to St. Clair, he said that was exactly what he himself would have done under like circumstances, and that it was a good thing, because he could sell the picture if ever—and that would never be—he should run into debt. We missed it a year later. It was bought, I believe, by Xerxes Crofter, my railroad reiver, whom I had set on foot again to the misery of many.

It was in mid-October, as I recall it, that we were once more at Holmwood.

Clayborne was a man of singularly equable character. He was capable of conducting a savage controversy with exasperating calmness, and with merciless use of the weapons of incisive English. Like some other men of large nature, he showed, as he grew older, a tendency toward greater forbearance, but never quite lost his sense of pleasure in contest. St. Clair said he was born old and grew younger as years went on. To our surprise, he proved to have the capacity to find novel sources of enjoyment, and to exhibit an almost childlike satisfaction in certain newly found pursuits. At present he had taken with fresh happiness to gardening, and when we met was in what Vincent called a state of eruptive satisfaction as to the success of his wild garden. St. Clair declared him to be under the impression that he had discovered flowers and invented trees. To me he seemed like a man who, having been mind-blind to nature, had found his eyesight; but genius is always competent to present us with surprises. Certain of

these changes of occupative tastes may have been fostered by the fact that of late his eyes had somewhat failed him, and declined to be tasked all day and half the night. When he became aware of this he bought Holmwood, and for two years or more amused himself by secretly adorning his purchase. It became a constantly sought resting-place during his long afternoon rides, and before we saw it he had dealt with it in a way which filled us all with astonishment.

As we walked through the hall he said to my wife: "You saw your garden, a place to plunder as you like. Now I shall have the pleasure to show you my own garden. Come."

We wandered here and there as he led us through a belt of pines, and at last came out on an open space of perhaps an acre. Around it was a low wall of gray stone. This must have been long in place, for it was covered with Japanese ivy and our own Virginia creeper, both aglow with varied tints of autumnal red. Straight walks of dull-red brick led across this space of flowers, those still in bloom being chiefly great masses of chrysanthemum, aster, and scarlet sage. At each corner of the walks were antique crumbled capitals of Greek columns. At the far side, in a curve of the wall, he had set a sixteenth-century well-head with a Latin inscription, and on top was placed a shallow basin of red antique marble, as a water-supply for the birds.

"The well is from Siena," he said; "the marbles I bought in Rome last year. I have an antique altar; it is not yet here."

Very quaint it was, and beautiful, as the women said, with cries of surprised delight. St. Clair was silent. Clayborne looked at him expectant.

"Do you like it?" he said.

When St. Clair was feeling even a great joy intensely his eyes were apt to fill, and he himself to feel, as now, a vague sense of dismay at the girl-like unrestraint of his emotion.

"Who did it, Clayborne?" he said. "Not you. It is beautiful, fitting, in perfect taste."

Our host smiled. "Why not I?"

"Because—because there was a woman's hand in it."

"By Zeus! Who told you that?"

"No one; I told myself. You like it, but a woman helped you. There is that gray amphora lying on the wall with the red vines over it. No; that was not your thought, nor the water for the birds."

Clayborne looked amused and a trifle annoyed. "Yes," he replied; "my cousin, Sibyl Maywood, my secretary; the most of it was her idea. I meant to put these capitals around the grass-plot in front of the house."

"Did you, indeed?" said St. Clair, smiling.

"Then," said Vincent, "she is the young woman we saw leaving the house when last we were here to dine?"

"Yes," said Clayborne.

"I saw her," said St. Clair, "before you returned home. She must be a person of singular good taste. She is lame and not quite erect, Mrs. Vincent, but,

> Fore God, she hath a lovely face.
> God in his mercy send her grace."

"Poor child!" said Mrs. Vincent.

"She is slightly, very slightly deformed, and halts," said Clayborne. He seemed to me, who knew him well, to be annoyed at these comments.

"How pitiful! It were better," said Anne Vincent, "that she were also deformed of face."

"Oh, no," said St. Clair; "no!"

"Why not?" said I.

"I do not know. Why do you ask? She has hair. Did you notice her hair? And a face—"

"Naturally," said Vincent, "the girl has hair and a face."

"What a man!" said St. Clair.

"I shall ask you all," said Clayborne, pausing, "to take an interest in my cousin; she is sure to please you. She has been living in the village for two months, and has become to me far more than a very clever secretary."

"May I ask where she came from?" said Anne Vincent.

"Her people," he replied, "were of the earliest settlers at Hingham. They were important in war and peace until two generations ago, when, after loss of means, the family fell away into incapables. They sought a cheap home in a remote New England village, and there lost touch of the class in which they had lived for two hundred years."

"That is not a rare case in our country," said Vincent; "for a family to keep its social place, product of some kind is needed. A race must make and keep money, or from time to time win some form of distinction. If it desire permanency, have the preserva-

tive instinct, it can only retain its hold upon the social group it has reached by more or less continuous recognition of social duties. At least this is true of our cities."

"Is it worth while," I said, "artificially to preserve station for a breed, as is done in England, or to let it depend for continued place and influence on its own power to keep what it has won? There is no doubt at all that real talent, capacity, is valuably advertised and gets its chance earlier if, as in England, it carry the name—the label—of a race already well known. Is it worth while to insure the chance of fresh product?"

"Perhaps," said Clayborne; "and since all real success is now more and more distinctly competitive, the label helps the strong more than it does the feeble. It does secure for literature an early audience. It does not now make that audience lenient, as it once did."

"But," said I, "may not all this measurably apply also to us? If a young man has available qualities, is he not advantaged in their use owing to his being one of a well-known family which has been able to hold its own?"

"Or get other folks' own," laughed St. Clair.

"Stop him," said Clayborne; "he has no conversational reverence. This is not foot-ball, Victor!"

"Yes, sir," said St. Clair, gaily.

"You are surely right, Owen, for several reasons, most of them obvious. If the father be a man of achievement, the son is apt, unfairly, to be predictively judged in youth by what in the parent is the resultant

of years. But then, also, because of family distinction, he does more easily get a hearing, and that is so hard to get. Moreover, certain social qualifications, which are fostered by generations of training, make for success in every line of life."

"Good manners for instance, and tact," said my wife.

"Oh, tact," said I, "is a gift of nature, unteachable. A duke may miss it, a mechanic have it."

"One sees it in some children, and very early in life," said Mrs. Vincent. "I think it presupposes refinement, automatic tendency to notice the little things of life, desire to please. I think some dogs have it; yes, I really think so."

"Why not?" said Clayborne. "I am sure that they are observant, gentle, and wish to please—as much as any one of us." Our friend who spoke was as entirely lacking in the quality we discussed as a kindly man could be. We smiled as he added, "Some men have tact which seems to be available only in certain relations of life."

"That is true," said Vincent; "one might talk long about it. As an example, I recall the case of General B——. He had the art to charm and convince a great political assembly, and was quick to discern hostility, and to answer questions with competence, courtesy, and grace. When, after the meeting, he was introduced to his political supporters, he quickly succeeded in displeasing most of them, and was pretty certain to say the wrong thing to every one."

"That seems hardly credible," said my wife.

"And yet," returned Clayborne, "it is true."

As we wandered to and fro the talk also wandered, until Vincent brought it back to the question of tact. "We were not very brilliant in our comments," he said, "and I let slip the chance of asking if the word 'tact' be, in our sense, an old one."

"No," replied Clayborne; "it is modern, and only of late is to be found in the dictionaries. Who coined it I do not know, nor who gave it the meaning now accepted. In Massinger a man says:

> They [women] being created
> To be both tractable and tactable.

Here is an adjective which has not our modern meaning. It may have been meant to describe women as tacticians. The context does not clear up the meaning. It would be a good adjective, 'tactable.' As to the noun, I must look further."

"Thank you," said Vincent; "and as I have been fortunate, I repeat the process and return to the other matter we talked over. I had meant to say, as regards what we see in England, that their way appeals to me personally, sentimentally. I like their idea of anchoring a family. I like these ancient homesteads, with their abiding traditions, their cherished graves, their emotional hold on the young who go out to win their way. When I come to reason on it coldly—"

"Oh, don't," cried St. Clair; "I like the English plan; I should have made a very admirable duke."

"The entail, would have to be strict," said Clayborne. "As a question in hereditation it is interest-

ing to observe how many American families have kept for over two hundred years the same social place, how many do this with remarkable distinction, and how many without such illustration."

"Of course," said I; "we see and know that. Abroad it is less well understood. The permanence of races, of families, in republican countries, where it is assumed that the leveling influences are effective, is really an interesting illustration of the despotic power of the inborn characteristics of a breed."

"Tell me, Mr. Clayborne," said my wife, "do large or small families produce the people of ability?"

"Shall we exclude genius?" he asked.

"Why?"

"Because genius is a glad freak of nature in a good humor. It has in a sense neither grandfather nor grandchild. Leave it out, and I answer that great talent, ability, or capacity is more apt to be found in children of large families."

"I am not sure," said Vincent. "There are some possible fallacies, numerical fallacies. But given a hundred thousand people, select the successful. Will these have come out of large family groups or small ones?"

"That states the problem fairly. I still think that I am correct; and there are good reasons why the children of a numerous family should excel an equal number of the children of small families. The inter-discipline of large sets of children is valuable. It is fine training for a larger world. The advantages are obvious. But all children should be brought up in the country. One sees the value of this in the success of

country-bred lads, who bring to a city the sturdy vigor of a youth hardened by farm life. The three B's, as the English say, are needed to make a lord chancellor, or for any lifelong contest."

"The three B's" said my wife—"what are they?"

I laughed. "I am like a certain American journal," replied Clayborne. "It once modestly declined to use these three B's as the title of a paper on boys, or to put them in fuller form. I am equally modest."

"And provoking," said Alice. "I do believe you are laughing at me."

It was rare that Clayborne desired to leave any question until it was completely dealt with. His inclination to lecture was like that of the people in Sir Arthur Helps's books, who are supposed to be merely talking, but who really converse in essays. We had a tacit agreement to prevent these interminable discussions. Now, to my surprise, Clayborne said: "This is indoor talk. Let us leave it, and take it up again some night by the fireside." We had been strolling about or pausing as we chatted.

St. Clair cast a mischievous glance at Mrs. Vincent, and said: "Dr. Johnson remarked that irreverence for continuity in conversation is apt to be associated with undeveloped intellectual capacity to connect the past with the future."

"What, what!" said Clayborne.

"How is it about conversational foot-ball?" laughed the poet.

"A talk must end sometime," said Clayborne. "No; on reflection I am wrong—a talk never ends. It is only adjourned. Come, you bad boy!"

"Indeed, you are right, Clayborne. But I want to discuss this charming novelty. Your garden is most beautiful. It has distinction. Everything in it seems fitting. But here at this middle space, where you have this fine Corinthian capital, there is wanting—well, some larger object. I shall make for you Keats's vase—the whole ode in marble. I have long wished to do it."

"Make it," said Clayborne. "Probably I shall like it better than that absurd poem. If Sibyl likes it I will put it here on this capital. Will it be very costly, Victor?" and he laughed.

"Yes, you old sinner. If I make it you are not to scold me for a year and a day."

"It will be costly," I remarked.

"Ah, here is the servant to call us to dinner. I have persuaded Miss Maywood to dine with us," said our host. "She is very shy. She is, as I told you, —or did I?—the last of a long line of Puritan saints, with a fair dilution of sinners. You will, I know, remember that this young woman has suddenly to appear among people who are unlike those she has seen or known."

He was evidently a trifle uneasy as to his experiment. As we walked toward the house my wife and Mrs. Vincent fell behind with me.

"Is not that like him?" said the elder woman. "As if—dear old friend!—surely excess of tact is not his failing."

My wife had and has certain fading beliefs as to classes, and the impropriety of bringing together people who do not fit comfortably into places to

which they are not accustomed. She said to Mrs. Vincent: "Our old friend may well be in doubt. It is pure folly, Anne. Of course the girl won't like it, and it will quite spoil our dinners."

"It will hardly be as bad as that. Let us make her like it, Alice. Now, you must not freeze her, poor thing!"

"As if—" said Mrs. North. "You are simply horrid, Anne Vincent."

I moved on, wisely silent, quite sure as to what each woman would do.

As we passed through the hall the new guest met us. "Miss Maywood," said Clayborne, formally presenting her in turn to each of us.

The secretary was in a white gown. She was of middle stature and slightly deformed, one shoulder being higher than the other. As she walked her halting gait was plainly to be seen. Her hands had what St. Clair described as a look of competence, and all their movements were singularly graceful. When seated, as I observed later, the results of long-extinct disease were no longer visible. Above this crooked frame rose a head of the utmost beauty. It was lighted up by dark-gray eyes, tender with lifelong reproach of the fate which had dealt with her beauty in so malign a fashion. Mrs. Vincent said later that the girl had too much hair. It was deep black, but of such extreme fineness as in the black-haired is rare. The mass of it seemed at first sight so great as to overweight the head, but this was carried well, and no feature lacked beauty.

Clayborne, who at this time had uncertain views

as to Miss Maywood's future, had spoken of her to me with freedom. I had, however, said no word of this to my wife, and preferred to give no chance of prejudging a person who must, I felt, be in some ways peculiar. I was quite unprepared by what my friend had told me for this refined face, with eyes made brilliant by the amount of light their unusual size reflected. This young woman may have been somewhat embarrassed, but she was among people of tact, who had every desire to set at ease a person who, as some of them thought, had been needlessly put in a false position.

My wife professed, as I have said, certain social theories which she defended with zeal, but on which she never acted. I was not surprised, therefore, to see that she was most gracious to Miss Maywood. As we went in to dinner the two elder women said all manner of appreciative things about the garden, our host having gaily presented the secretary as his landscape-gardener. We were still chatting as we sat down. Miss Maywood sat between me and Mrs. Vincent; St. Clair was opposite. I am very sensitive to voices, and when Miss Maywood spoke I knew at once that I was hearing one of those speaking instruments which are more rare than any voice of song, whatever its compass or its sympathetic qualities. While she was talking to Mrs. Vincent, or being talked to, I sat reflecting upon the irony of fate which should have forever denied to this voice the privilege of saying to a man, "Yes, I love you." Our host was talking of Greek cemeteries to my wife. Vincent, on his left, was silent, a quiet listener. Mrs. Vincent

was sedulously engaged in making talk which might interest a young person situated as was Miss Maywood. At first she had scant replies, but soon the "tender art of head and heart" had its usual triumph. As Miss Maywood, encouraged, began to make little ventures, I was so caught by the charm of her voice that I became aware, as often chanced thereafter, that I was only half conscious of what thought this changeful music carried. I have known only two other women who possessed this gift. One had it by right of inheritance. One was an Irish lady, a nursing Sister of Charity.

St. Clair, who sat opposite, was tranquilly studying the very remarkable face of the young woman beside me. Once or twice she seemed aware of the too steady attention of which she was the object. It did not appear to me that the indecorous steadfastness of St. Clair's gaze actually embarrassed her. As she looked and turned away she was apparently only curious and gently amused.

I began by and by to attend more closely to the chat of my neighbors, and was not long in understanding that Miss Maywood was to become one of those sudden attractions in which Mrs. Vincent delighted. These were apt to be what St. Clair called "friendly flirtations," and to end with more or less abruptness. If the person concerned proved permanently attractive, these early and somewhat deceptive attentions might result in a friendship the value of which I had long learned to know. But this relation involved for Anne Vincent's friends such charity as knew how to condone the faults of a noble but master-

fully impulsive nature. In her efforts to set right the world she sometimes hurt when she would have helped, and was sure in the end to suffer far more than the wounded friend. It was at times as hard to be her friend as not to be. I was thinking of her peculiarities when, as I said, the substance of the talk beside me began to capture my attention. The shy cripple with the beautiful face was speaking at last with animated freedom. Mrs. Vincent related the offer of St. Clair as to the vase.

"I read it last week," said Miss Maywood—"I mean the poem; I never read it before."

"Indeed? Then you are to be envied. There ought to be a way of blotting out of memory all remembrance of a great poem or novel, so that many times one could have the joy a first reading gives. I envy you—"

"Ah, no, no," cried Miss Maywood; "I never want to let anything go, never!"

"And have you what I so lack—a memory?"

"Yes; I can often repeat a poem after once hearing it. I got my real education late, and that is why I am so ignorant, and there was, there is, so much to learn. I try to be careful how I talk about books, because the great ones I am only just learning to know. I am like a prince coming into his kingdom out of exile. Books seem to me like people."

"I do not think, my dear, that I know people who are like books, except that some people are unreadable, and some appear to have no table of contents."

Miss Maywood laughed. "Oh, but I meant that books are like people, not people like books."

to be read at this age or that. He says at thirty I may read 'Hamlet.'"

"I hardly agree with him," said I; "I am for letting young people loose in a library. The reader is born, not made; you cannot help the others." Mrs. Vincent shook her head in dissent. "I am sure," I added, "that Mr. Clayborne never advised you to read Keats. He has no real taste for verse. He likes dramas of action, and no others. He has, as St. Clair says in his absurd way, every ology except imaginology, and that it is because of his want of imagination that he fails in the drawing of great historic characters."

Miss Maywood flushed slightly, hesitated, and then, to my amusement, said, "And yet does he not understand all of you?"

"Not fully," said Mrs. Vincent, smiling, "and never will; enough to love us, that suffices. What does he give you as a literary diet?"

"He advises me to learn Greek, and to read Euripides. He says Keats's poem about the vase is pure nonsense."

"Then," said St. Clair, overhearing us, "you read it first only a week ago?"

"Yes," she said, of a sudden shy; "only a week ago."

"And where did you read it?"

This was so like the speaker that Mrs. Vincent and I smiled at each other unspoken comment of amusement.

"In the woods one day," she answered, with no sign of the amazement I felt at his question.

"Did you cry?" he said, with strange insight, and with his amazing unconcealment of thought.

"I did," she said quietly, "a little."

"What nonsense, Victor!" I said. "Why should it make any one cry?"

Not heeding me, he went on: "What made you cry?"

"I know," said my wife, overhearing this singular talk, and realizing its unfitness.

To my surprise, Miss Maywood did not accept her amiable interruption, but replied: "Why did I cry? Oh, there are two lines—"

"I know them," cried St. Clair:

> "That leaves a heart high sorrowful and cloyed,
> A burning forehead, and a parching tongue."

"Yes," she said, without any appearance of surprise; "you are right. But I do not know why they disturbed me."

"Oh," he cried, "they do not belong in that poem. They strike a false note. I have inked them out in my Keats. But the rest! Ah, the rest is golden, precious, as nearly perfect as verse can be, except—"

"Please not to criticize," she pleaded.

"I will not. You are right." He flushed with strong emotion as he spoke. "Such things as that are like lilies, not good to eat, cast before a mean world of swine. What shall it do with them? I am sorry he wrote it."

"No, no," she said, forgetful of her shyness. "It gives a new joy to those who may have few." At

this she, too, flushed confession, aware of having yielded to a reflection on her own limitations.

These were two children of nature. He was really a noble thing to see, as he paused thinking. He had walked out from town, in snow-white flannel, a bit of red tie around his neck, and above it the delicately featured face with its crown of curls. He turned abruptly and began to speak to Mrs. North.

"Mr. Clayborne told me," said Miss Maywood, "that Mr. St. Clair was a bundle of surprises. He *can* surprise one, can he not, Dr. North?"

"Indeed, he is rich in that capacity," I returned. "You have had as yet but a mild experience. I am sure that Clayborne described us all. He told me he had prepared you for the extraordinary people you were to meet."

"He did—he did," she said, laughing. "Oh, he did!"

She was queerly simple, and had as yet no defensive conversational stratagems at command.

"And what did he say of us?" asked I.

"Come! That is hardly fair," said Mrs. Vincent.

"Quite true," said I. "I could easily complete his account of St. Clair. He probably said he was so good to-day that you wondered that he could ever be bad, and so bad to-morrow that you wondered how he ever could be good."

She looked comically conscious, but said only, "He did say he was a poet—a kind of poet, he said."

"That, at least, is true," remarked Mrs. Vincent; "he is a poet."

"Are poets ever ugly?" said Miss Maywood.

"Certainly he is not," said I.

"No," she said, with honest simplicity; "he is beautiful."

Now, when this artless child said "beautiful," it acquired a fresh value, like worn gold reissued from a royal mint. Even Mrs. Vincent was a trifle disconcerted. She hastened to say, "Oh, he is well enough; men are never beautiful, my dear."

"Then I may say you are," said this wonderful voice.

"Indeed!" laughed the elder woman; "I have been told that in my day, but usually by men who soon or late expected a pleasant return."

"But I don't expect anything."

"Then you shall have a little love, child." She touched with caressing gentleness the hand next to her.

At this moment Clayborne asked Mrs. Vincent a question, and I had leisure to reflect upon this intellectual ingénue. Would she keep her bewildering simplicity? How would the hard world deal with her? Then there was more chat, and merry, around the table, for, luckily, this day we had champagne. Miss Maywood listened, smiling at times, but naturally enough saying almost nothing after the talk became general. Had Clayborne been wise in giving her to eat of the fruit of knowledge, and in transplanting this wild rose with its broken stalk?

We soon went into the library, and after wandering in groups, fell into the usual circle, standing about the fire.

"I have been thinking over your story of the caliph," said I, aside, to St. Clair. "I am sure you made it up yourself; but if it left an Orientalist like Clayborne in doubt, it was good enough."

"I had a better in my mind yesterday, but when I came to look for it to-day it was gone. Some one, something, had opened the cage, and the bird had flown."

"Will it ever return?"

"Probably not; no use to call it. Leave the cage door open and go away. I have lost many thoughts in this way. You think you have them safe in the bank of memory, and to-morrow your draft comes back protested. And yet a thought is a thing that, once it is alive, does not die. Where is it? Not gone, because to-morrow or a month hence I may find it, or it me."

"Associative relation does, of course, help one," said I, "but it is where it fails that the puzzle comes in, and tells us how little we know of the mechanics of the mind."

"What! what!" exclaimed Clayborne, turning toward us. "Is St. Clair talking psychology?"

"Yes; we were restating the commonplace that the laws of association usually fail to explain the sudden revival of long-lost ideas, and that not to search, as we all know, is the sure way to find."

"Like Bo-Peep's sheep," said my wife, overhearing us. "Let them alone and they 'll come home, and bring their tales behind them."

"My compliments, Madam North," cried St. Clair. "As an illustrative quotation that is faultless."

"What?" cried Clayborne. "I do not see it. What amuses you all?"

"T-a-i-l-s," spelled my wife; "t-a-l-e-s, please."

"What nonsense!" said the scholar.

When our laughter ceased, I said: "I was about to tell St. Clair a fact in regard to memorial association of ideas, and more than mere ideas. Dr. M—— told me that this chanced to him. He has studied the venom of serpents, as you know, but for years, many years, had given it no serious thought. Neither had he nor any one known or conceived of this poison as other than a single noxious form of albumin. One day, in ascending the steps of a house in which he had at one time resided, he found himself, by habit, with a latch-key in his hand. He was clearly in an absent mood. As he recognized the fact, he happened to glance at the door-mat. It was made of rope. One side was loose and lay in a coil, like the familiar coil of a serpent. Instantly there was present in his consciousness the belief that the venom of serpents is not one, but two or more distinct poisons. He stood surprised, seeing at once how much this might explain. He was so secure of this conclusion that he set to work, aided by a friend, and after five months of laboratory research succeeded in confirming his thought—I mean, in discovering that all serpent venom contains two or more poisons, a fact which proved the key to many problems in animal toxicology."

"And is that," said Vincent, "really and simply all of the known fact? I mean as to how the idea was born into the recognition of the conscious mind."

"Yes; all that he or any one knows."

"Was it a subconscious mechanism," said St. Clair, "which long before evolved this conclusion, and waited the developmental process of a chance association to bring it into the region of consciousness?"

Clayborne glanced at the poet with amused curiosity. The reflection was unlike St. Clair; but then, as Vincent once said, St. Clair was continually falling below or rising above what was expected of him.

Our host said: "Did you ever have such a thing happen to you, Victor?"

"I? No, indeed," laughed St. Clair; "not I. I do not think; I dream. I lose, and never find; you find, and never lose. Sometimes I am a month in hot chase after a single word I require, or a strong rhyme I want, and know is to be found. At last I find it, or it finds me."

As we talked, the girl with the beautiful face listened with rapt attention. I observed that her eyelashes were—it is hard to say—almost too long. Their veil-like overshadowing of the eyes gave her a look of dreamy tenderness, of reverie, which passed away when she addressed any one. Then her face became expressively earnest, and despite her shyness, she studied with untrained intensity of gaze the person to whom she was speaking.

"What are you thinking about, Miss Maywood?" said my wife. "These great folks get me sadly befogged at times."

"My thought is not of much value. I was thinking how glad Mr. St. Clair must be when he finds the very word he wants; like—" and she paused, coloring slightly.

"Well, Sibyl?" said Clayborne, gently.

"Oh, it is as if a wild bird of the woods were to alight on his window-sill and say: 'I will sing for you. This is the song you want.'"

"Yes; it is always at morning," said St. Clair.

I saw, as he regarded this ethereal face, a look of pity, plain to read for one who knew him. I saw, too, by the soft lift of Anne Vincent's brow, how astonished she was at this childlike revelation of imaginative thought. Clayborne did not like it. I hardly know why. Any exercise of imagination in everyday talk displeased him.

"If," he said, "St. Clair had been decently educated he would not need the birds to fetch his vocabulary."

"Oh, mauler of men and tangler of history!" cried the poet. "You would write better if you felt now and then the pangs of word-hunger. Ah, if one could be allowed to invent words—"

"Only childhood has that privilege," said my wife.

"Or the childhood of nations," said Clayborne. "Then, too, the nation, like the child, loses much of its invented vocabulary. I wish some one would collect the vocabulary of childhood. My mother, up to the age of eight, persistently used certain words which only her family could understand, as 'dibbin' for water, 'walla' for food of all kinds, 'wunk' for a dog."

"How very strange!" said my wife. "How could they have originated?"

"Ah, that is a world-wide puzzle as to all the tongues," said our host.

"I saw," said I, "once, in my clinical service, a child who spoke volubly a language entirely her own. It was understood at last, or acquired, by those about her, but no word of it could I comprehend."

"That is the more singular," said Vincent, "when one considers how imitative is childhood."

"Yes," said St. Clair; "it would seem to be more easy to imitate than to invent. Children are mysterious folk to me, and yet mysteriously near to me, too."

It was true. All children were instantly on easy terms of intimacy with this receptive nature.

"Which are harder to understand,—I mean as to character," said Miss Maywood,—"boys or girls? When I taught a class of little children I did seem to see through the boys more clearly."

"Oh, girls, girls," said my wife; "even for women."

"Nobody is hard to understand," said Clayborne. "Let us sit by the fire; my ride has made me tired. There are the cigars."

"Girls are always little women," continued my wife; "but boys are boys, not little men."

"They represent more fully the primitive barbarian," said St. Clair.

No one replied to this, but I saw on Mrs. Vincent's face the look of far-away sadness which came now and then when children were the subject of our talk. She was childless, as I have elsewhere said.

For a while we sat smoking, the chat going where chance took it. At last St. Clair asked: "Where is that sermon, Clayborne?"

The big bulk of the scholar stirred uneasily in his chair. "I repent," he said.

"Pity more preachers do not," said St. Clair.

Turning to the scholar, Mrs. Vincent said: "You wrote it. I see it in your face."

"But St. Clair also promised," returned Clayborne.

"I did, but I pre-repented. I am sure Clayborne did not; he always keeps his word."

"Queer little phrase that—to keep your word," said Vincent. "A man who gives his word keeps it. What was the text we gave as our choice for its difficulty of use?"

"The text," said my wife, "was, 'Jesus wrote on the ground.' It came out of a statement of Mr. Clayborne that a sermon could be made on any text."

"Please, Mr. Clayborne," said Sibyl, "we do want to hear."

"I always obey Mrs. Vincent," he returned. As he spoke, he took a portfolio from the table beside him. "Well, if you will have it, here it is."

I saw on Miss Maywood's face an expression of repressed mirth, for which I did not see cause.

"What can he say?" murmured my wife to me.

"Listen. Who knows?"

"Before I begin," said our host, "let me say a word or two. Except as to St. Clair, who has a dozen creeds, we are all, I fancy, with variations, of one mode of thought as to our faith. At least, in the noble old Church of England we find sufficient freedom, and this alone holds me, as it holds many; for, as the years go by, and we come nearer to a world

which has no creed, the freedom to use unfettered thought becomes a cherished privilege. My dear Mrs. Vincent thinks me at times unorthodox. So does my Quaker friend Randolph. Indeed, I am variously and affectionately criticized. Let us, each and all, hope that we are right, and remember that many of the forms of religious usage are the children of taste and sentiment, or tradition."

"I cannot stand this," said St. Clair. "Here am I selected as the one wicked boy. I wish to say that no man can live by the words of Christ—none of you."

"Ah, my dear Victor, nothing I have said led up to this. I was claiming the freedom which is a consequence of the mental powers God gave. I was stating the fact, or meant to, that for the mass the form is far more than the creed. Now your wandering wits bring us on to ground I did not mean to tread. The man who does not look broadly at that great biography must land in unhappy incredulity, or, if narrow, fasten on certain texts, or commit himself to some form of absurd effort to live by the bread alone of single texts which, because of some mental perversity in the man, become for him dominant."

"There is no need to illustrate that," said St. Clair. "Go on."

"Give me, then, a moment more," said Clayborne. "To his disciples, the primal heroes of a new creed, the parents of altruism, to these he gave laws of conduct clearly impossible for the world of men. The application of the commentary of common sense to Christ's life and sayings would have saved much

doubt. My Quaker friend will say that Christ forbade all retaliation, all use of force, and hence that to us war should be impossible, and a police force seem wicked; but he says of the centurion, the man whose trade was war, that he has seen no such faith as his. He does not use his faith and gratitude to turn him from the business of war. I left my friend Randolph to digest this idea. More could be said of it on both sides. And now, dear congregation, this is my first sermon, and will be my last. I assume on your part intelligence, which is what the clergy do not always assume. This assumption enables me to be brief, and rarely to do more than sow seed of thought, for it is to be remembered that Christ preached no long sermons. We use his sermons as texts.

"What Christ wrote on the dust of the temple pavement we do not know. Here alone we learn that he could write. That is interesting. In our study of him, we are confused by our conception of the man who, being God, was yet man, and could pray for release from a cruel fate. Was he really writing, did he write words, or was it that automatic use of the hand which is so common during a time of intense thought?"

"Pardon me!" said Vincent; "I have often seen that. I put a grave question to a man last week. He listened, I suppose; but even after I ceased to speak, he went on drawing triangles on my blotting-pad, and at last answered me decisively."

"Is the congregation allowed the privilege of interpolation?" said I.

"Certainly," said Clayborne.

"It would contribute interest to the ordinary sermon," said St. Clair.

"I vote against interruption," said Mrs. Vincent. "Do go on!"

"I cannot answer my own question," continued our host; "but I feel for myself that whatever brings the Christ into nearness of relation with the ways of men is for me valuable. It cannot destroy our sense of the infinitely larger relation. I dare say there are times in the lives of the best of us when the sense of nearness to—shall I say oneness with?—the great Maker makes it easier to comprehend the lofty duality of Christ's nature. He wrote, or, seeming to write, at all events was silent. How few of us have the courage of silence! We speak, and hearing no reply, speak again. This silence was to give time for thought to himself, to the hostile questioners, to the woman in her anguish of guilt and fear. If he wrote, what was it? There are strange traditions as to these unread words, lost as the wind blew about the dust on the temple floor. An air of mystery lies about this striking scene, the mystery of a half-revealed life. But no life is wholly revealed to us. The autobiography least of all gives us to know the whole of a man. No man is ever perfectly revealed to those who best know him. No man knows himself wholly. The higher the man, the less can he be entirely acquainted with that self, the less can the world know him. Genius must be full of self-surprising revelations, and this helps our comprehension of Christ, for, as he thought,—and to the Christ-man came the full sense of the majesty of the thoughts born to his con-

sciousness,—he must have had in supreme measure the feeling of joyful creativeness, which is the reward of genius. A larger mystery envelops this white-robed figure, but it is a mystery shared by all who are great —in a degree by all who live."

"By George, that is fine!" cried St. Clair.

"We don't swear during sermons," said my wife. "Don't interrupt, please."

"But what is mystery?" said Vincent.

"Yes," murmured Sibyl; "I was about to ask that. And what is mysticism?"

"Let us leave that," said Mrs. Vincent. "Please to go on; you men are intolerable."

"If," read Clayborne, "there were left nothing unguessed, unknown, mysterious, about those you love or like, life would lose the charm of curiosity."

"Oh, say of imagination," said the irrepressible St. Clair.

"Well, then, of imagination. The mystery of nature is half its charm. Complete revealment would take out of the life of human relations much of their joy, and even of their power. To be indifferent to the attractiveness of the unrevealed is one of the signs of a low nature.

"Finally, if religion were not founded on the unknowable, it would cease to live in the hearts of men. As of religion, as of Christ, so of all who are worthy of love. As life goes on we secure firmer reasons for love, and the friendship born of love. We seem to know one another. What have the changing fortunes of years left you two to learn? Yes, you know one another. You think so. Comes then into your lives some new

joy or some incomprehensible sorrow. You are startled at the revelations it brings, of faith, of fortitude, of generous unselfishness. These growths, developed out of the long-sown seeds of character, may come up again and again in new forms and with tender surprises, because this is the mystery of life, that no one knows another wholly, not even the well-loved companion of a lifetime.

"And what of the to-morrow of death? Will all things become plain to us? Shall we have only to ask and receive answer? Would that be as one could wish? Then would effort cease and character remain a changeless quantity. The Christian attempt to realize the mystery of the world to come has resulted in a materialistic degradation of the obvious meanings of Him who placed us here, and who will surely not leave us motiveless hereafter. Says El-Din-Attar: 'O man, thou art ever a stranger in the tents of life, and in the tents of the hereafter thou shalt be still a stranger.'"

When the resonant voice ceased there was silence for a time. Mrs. Vincent said at last: "Who wrote that? Not you, dear old friend."

"Why not I?"

"Because you are not an imaginative man. Mr. St. Clair wrote it. It was a neat little plot; but for my part I am thankful. I forgive you both."

"And yet," said my wife, "I did want to hear how each of you two would deal with a difficult text. I presume it was Mr. St. Clair who wrote it?"

"Yes, I wrote it. Do you like it?" he added, turning to Miss Maywood.

"I—yes—I should have to read it again to be sure. I wish Mr. Clayborne had also given us his sermon. If I were Mr. St. Clair I should have made it a poem."

I learned later that Miss Maywood had type-written the sermon, and was therefore in the secret.

St. Clair smiled. "I did, I did, but I tore it up."

"Good sense that," growled the scholar, and meanwhile I saw Mrs. Vincent gravely regarding the two younger people.

"I did not know how to deal with it," said Clayborne.

"Lack of imagination," said St. Clair, pleased at the chance.

Miss Maywood flushed a little. An attack on her benefactor surprised and hurt her. "Perhaps—Mr. Clayborne—was afraid."

"I was," said he. "Don't explain, child. They all know what you mean. You are quite correct. I can reason and deal coldly enough with some things, but not with certain others."

St. Clair was hard to silence. "I am not sure I comprehend. It seems to me nothing is too sacred for comment. Was I irreverent?"

"No, no," said I.

"You people, I know, regard me as irreligious, because you think if a man does not go to church and—"

"Don't spoil it all for us," said Mrs. Vincent.

"Oh, I suppose I am like a butterfly over a stormy ocean. I flutter, unaware of the soundless depths below me."

"Please don't!" said Sibyl.

It was an unpleasing turn of talk, for we were all feeling the strength and reverence of his sermon.

Quick to note it, my wife said gaily: "Miss Maywood, when you know Mr. St. Clair better you will believe about one third he says."

"And," cried St. Clair, laughing, "is this the reward of your preacher? And have none of you the courage to wrestle with the thought I gave you, that Christ could not have expected the mass of men to live the life he pointed out as desirable for the first disciples of his faith? I saw the other day at Owen's a life of one Linacre, a doctor, who had the luck to live about 1460 to 1524, when men knew little, and thought they knew all. In his old age he took, for novelty, to reading St. Matthew. The fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters were enough. He threw the book aside, and cried out, 'Either this is not the gospel or we are not Christians!' What else could he say?"

"And is this invention?" said Clayborne.

Then, to our amazement, we learned that our scholar had never heard of the great physician who attended on Erasmus and was the friend of Sir Thomas More. It did not trouble him. As for St. Clair, he said, laughing: "I, Miss Maywood, am the court fool. All my folly is my own, all my wisdom is borrowed."

"If you were a fool," said the young woman, seriously, "you would not know it. That is the worst foolishness of folly."

"Good gracious, my dear!" said Mrs. Vincent.

"That sounds like Mr. Clayborne's wisdom," said my wife.

Sibyl laughed.

"Come, it is late," said Mrs. Vincent. "We must go. And, Sibyl,—I shall call you Sibyl,—you are to be at my house to-morrow at three for the Boston symphony concert. Don't forget."

"Forget! How could I?"

In the carriage,—for we had driven out to dine,—Mrs. Vincent talked to me of the evening we had passed, while Vincent smoked in silence. St. Clair remained at Holmwood for the night.

"What do you think," said I, "of Miss Maywood? Is it a wise thing Clayborne has done?"

"Yes; it was both wise and kind. She will gain enlarged possibilities of enjoyment."

"And will learn new limitations of happiness," said Vincent.

"But anywhere," returned Mrs. Vincent, "life would teach her at last what that crippled body must bring in the way of denials to a heart ready for love. I think there is much in that girl. How simple she is, how acute, how oddly courageous!"

Said Vincent: "Anne, you are going to make a favorite of this young woman. You will dangerously enlarge her opportunities for contrast of her own fate with that of the more happily made. If you leave her to this simple life of helping Clayborne, it will do her no great harm, and may perhaps be a good thing. What you will do will be of more than doubtful value. Is it not so, Owen? Am I not right?"

No woman likes her husband to call in another's judgment to sustain his hostility of opinion. Mrs. Vincent was quiet for a minute, and then said: "You may be right, Fred; but I am not sure you are. I will be careful."

This she was not likely to be, but I, being discreet, held my tongue, and, after a little, remarked: "She is the Lady of Shalott, and when she floats out into the world her heart will break."

"Yes; that was what St. Clair meant. He has terrible insight at times."

My wife, all this time silent, said: "Anne, my heart aches for the girl. She was a great surprise to me. I expected to see the ordinary typical New England 'school-marm.' How she must suffer with that face and that crumpled figure! I should have no mirror in my room were I as she is."

"Last week," said I, "as you know, she was in bed a day or two with influenza. I saw her, at Clayborne's request. She has no large mirror in her room."

"Poor child!" said my wife; "but there was a cheval-glass in that room."

Again Mrs. Vincent was silent awhile, and then said: "Fred, did you notice the girl's voice?"

"I? No; what is there to notice?"

"Oh, my dear Fred!"

"It is heavenly sweet," said I; "like Sister Mary's. You remember her, Mrs. Vincent, at Chestnut Hill Hospital, during the war."

"I do. It was wonderful."

"I recollect once, when in a hospital in Washing-

ton, asking her to persuade a Confederate captain to submit to the removal of a part of his hand. He had absolutely refused. I stood by as she urged the matter upon him. She talked long and earnestly, stating the case well. When she came to an end I said to him, as she moved away, 'I think you must see the need for an operation.'

"'What operation?'

"'Did you not understand what Sister Mary said?'

"'No, I did n't understand what the deuce she said. I was listening to *Her*. Lord, does n't she warble! Do what you like, doctor.'"

"A rather doubtful accomplishment," said Vincent. "I am glad I have it not."

"Some one else has," said my wife, touching Anne Vincent's hand.

"That must be why Fred Vincent never knows what I say to him. When I say seriously, 'I want five minutes of your attention, Fred,' he says, 'Very good, Anne.' Then after a while he remarks, 'I do not think I am quite clear, my dear, as to what you mean.' Now I shall agreeably interpret his want of apprehension."

"Pure slander," said Vincent; "I cannot defend myself. I hate to talk in a carriage. But what a pretty name Sibyl is!"

III

ANNE VINCENT was sure to consider what Vincent said to her, and probably he put his case later with his usual vigor of statement, for that lady was more than commonly thoughtful as to where she took the new favorite, and to whom she presented her. My wife may also have contributed prudent counsels, for although she too was attracted, and inclined to add Sibyl to her collection of what we called her lame ducks, she was less apt than Anne Vincent to insist on their acceptance by those who were less kind and more critical. Mrs. Vincent took Miss Maywood to concerts, now and then to the theater, and saw, personally, a good deal of the girl.

I was sure that the striking face of Sibyl Maywood would at once attract the too attentive eyes of St. Clair. Perfect physical beauty of body or of face excited him strangely. He held himself free to study the new face or form, and to make comments which at times seemed to us outrageous. Then he was given to poetically idealizing the art idol, and imagining for it moral and mental gifts which it might or might not possess. My wife said that St. Clair was never a bore, even when he talked his wildest nonsense, but that sometimes, when he imagined some dull girl to be Minerva because she had the hand of Venus, the

faint shadow of the adjective "tiresome" did hover over that sensitive noun "talk." I said that was true, but elaborate.

"You are ungrateful. Be so good as to say it better."

I admitted my incapacity, and ventured upon a prophetic statement. I said: "If ever St. Clair feels the charm of some unusual temperament, and sees later the beauty of its owner, he will be hopelessly tangled in the net of love. He will never be hard hit in the ordinary way by being caught first by face or form. He is too accustomed, as an artist, to be over-critical and to look for defects."

My wife admitted that there were several ways of falling in love, but when I laughed because she said some men stumbled into love, she declined to go on, for, indeed, her experience had been large.

Now, all this took the form of comments made at breakfast, when most I like to talk. During my winter of work all day long I examine the witnesses we call nurses or patients, and try with much use of skilled labor to get at the truth. Then come the tired evenings, when I have little left to give. But during the night season (I like that phrase, the night *season*: it implies change) the weary man may unconsciously travel in stranger lands than daylight knows, and return again refreshed and eager, to linger over the earliest meal, and gladly break the fast of the night's silence.

When my wife invited me to say better what she had said, I had to confess that I could not. This challenge came at the close of a half-hour gay with

the kind of good talk which no man can or should expect to be able to report fully. When Alice doubted my wisdom as applied to our friend, I added evasively that there might be a better way of describing St. Clair's mental and moral attitude where the beautiful attracted him. I said: "It is absolutely free from the sensual."

"Yes; it appears to be a pure adoration of beauty."

"No, no, it is more complex. If it were unalloyed he would not admit the need to idealize the possessor, and thus to excuse himself. Is it not our tendency to attribute to mere beauty all that is not beauty? Thus man self-excuses his weakness."

"But that is love in its childhood, Owen."

"True; and now at last you are wise. This man has brief love-affairs—oh, surface love-affairs with a hand, a foot, a face, a figure. It has made mischief, my dear Alice, and will again, but nothing can happen in this way to Clayborne's poor little crippled cousin."

"Oh, my dear, stupid Owen! You forget Clayborne's Eastern sayer of proverbs?"

"What is it, Alice? Hang his proverbs!"

"I forget. I thought I had it."

"Well, I must go. Was it very fine?"

"It was."

When I was in the hall she called me back. "Now I remember it," she said.

"Well?"

"I won't tell you, because you won't believe it."

"Nonsense!" said I, and left her. She has never told me.

On his return from the East St. Clair established his studio in an old-fashioned double house in an out-of-the-way locality It belonged to Clayborne. "I can't let it," said the scholar. "I will not sell my family home. Use it, Victor." St. Clair, who was like a child about gifts, said, "Yes, it will do admirably." To make a studio a lofty addition was built out into the garden, and a door opened into it from the old drawing-room. The up-stairs rooms served for bedroom and study, and here St. Clair took up his abode. An old black man became his cook and valet.

Late in November he asked us to take tea with him, and to see the vase he had made for Clayborne's garden—the vase of Keats's poem. I confess to having been curious. It was near dusk when we entered the studio. Vincent was too busy to come. I saw Miss Maywood look about her with quick glances of interest. "Come," I said; "let me show you how statues are born." The clay models, the bits of plaster legs and arms, the tools, the sketches here and there, the costly, carelessly used brocades and Oriental stuffs, caught her eye in turn. She asked many questions. At last she said, "Where is my vase?"

"Your vase?"

"Yes. It was I who told Mr. St. Clair he ought to make it."

"Indeed!" She promised to be as fertile of surprises as our poet.

"Yes; before I saw all of you I knew about Mr. St. Clair. When I made the garden I said to Mr. Clayborne that it would be pretty to have a marble

vase like some of his, which are, you know, of clay. He said it would, and so, thinking to please him, I wrote a little letter to Mr. St. Clair. That was how he came to think of it."

"And when you wrote you had not yet seen him?"

"No. Was that wrong? He was a friend of my cousin." She was quick to observe the note of faint criticism in my query.

"Oh, not wrong," I said. "Did he answer?"

"No, he did not. Mr. Clayborne, I saw, liked the idea, and I thought if I could see the vase I should understand how Keats felt when he wrote. But now I feel that it must not stand in the garden. It must be alone somewhere in the wood. There is a spring —don't you think I am right?"

"Good gracious! I do not know. It may be a failure, not fit to be seen or put anywhere."

"Oh, do not say that! That would really grieve me. Let us see it." With these words she walked across the room.

Mrs. Vincent, my wife, and Clayborne were standing near a life-size statue, which was boldly modeled, and still in the clay. St. Clair had thrown off the wet sheet which kept it moist.

"What is it?" said I. "Ah, I see!"

"It is only a crude sketch," said the sculptor, "the model for a monument."

"Lincoln!" said I.

"Yes; the two Lincolns—the complete leader of men and the boy. It has been rejected by the committee."

The sketch was of the utmost vigor. On a rock

high above us stood the great President, with his strong, homely, humorous face, a look of loneliness in the eyes. The hands were clasped, palms down. I once saw him standing in this attitude. We were silent a moment.

"When was it?" said Miss Maywood.

My wife looked at her. "When? What do you mean, Sibyl?"

The girl did not seem to hear. She was gazing intensely at the storied visage, so pathetic with the deep lines drawn by multitudinous decisions and fifty years of patient endurance of many things.

St. Clair replied for her. "I thought of him as on the night before his death. He is thinking of his life, of his boyhood, of the past."

Beside the rough rock, at his feet, stood the long, ungainly figure of Lincoln, the boy, in a hunting-shirt, his hand resting on an ax-handle, one foot on a log, a serious figure, in the brief pause from labor, considering with quiet, lineless face the future, as above him the complete man regarded an heroic past.

"How could they reject it?" said my wife.

"Committees are quaint animals," said the sculptor; "but they cannot deprive me of the pleasure this conception brought me."

"Yes," said my wife; "that must be the best of it. Do you recall the monument at Constantinople they call 'Les Pleureuses'? No committee would have passed that."

"Oh, yes, yes," cried St. Clair; "and I know what you want to say of it."

"Well," said Alice, smiling, "tell us."

"Miss Maywood," he said, turning to the secretary, "it is a large tomb, and on it are eighteen figures of one woman, in every mood of sorrow, from the anguish of recent loss to the calm of attained serenity."

"Yes," said Mrs. North, "it is one and the same woman, and the tomb is her husband's. It must have taken long to make. She may, she must, have seen that the sculptor was telling in marble not only what she herself had been, but also what she would be."

"Do you know the lines about it? I can recall only the first verse:

> What gracious nunnery of grief is here!
> One woman garbed in sorrow's every mood;
> Each fair presentment celled apart in fear,
> Lest that herself upon herself intrude,
> And break some tender dream of sorrow's day
> Here cloistered lonely, set in marble gray."

"Who wrote that?" asked Clayborne.

St. Clair did not reply, but said: "Come, now, and see Keats's vase—my vase."

Leaving Sibyl and the scholar contemplative before his great hero, Lincoln, we followed St. Clair, and saw him take the cover from a marble vase some four feet in height. At a loss for a pedestal, the sculptor had set his vase on a broken-backed kitchen chair. He had strengthened one cracked leg with twine and a splint of wood. The incongruity of the vase and the improvised support struck me at once, but I said nothing. Then I heard Clayborne, who had left

Sibyl: "Why did you put it on that hideous stool, Victor? It is very beautiful; but the chair spoils it. It is like putting a beautiful head on a distorted body." As he spoke, Sibyl approached.

Mrs. Vincent looked up at the speaker. She had hoped, as she told me later, that Miss Maywood had not heard him. I was so charmed with the loveliness of my friend's realization of the poet's dream that I scarcely took in this tactless criticism. Nor, strange to say, did St. Clair apprehend the awkward force of Clayborne's words. He looked annoyed, but this was because he loved all praise and deeply felt all blame. Above everything he liked praise from Clayborne, who now called to Sibyl as she came nearer.

"Look at this, Sibyl. The pedestal ruins the vase. Is not that so?"

He had not turned as he spoke. She made no reply. Mrs. Vincent said afterward that the girl heard it all, and that she flushed and slipped away at once. My wife spoke quickly a whispered word to Anne Vincent, and then said aloud: "I think Sibyl has gone into the outer room, Mr. Clayborne. I will see about the tea and send her back."

In a few minutes she herself returned, saying that we must all come and take tea; Sibyl would have it ready in a few minutes. St. Clair had arranged the remaining apartment on the ground floor as his dining-room. Thanks to Mrs. Vincent, it was simply furnished. When we entered, Miss Maywood was bending over the silver samovar which St. Clair had brought from Russia. I saw Clayborne looking at her with unusual attention.

"Why did you run away? What is the matter, child?" he said, with the absolute directness which characterized the man. I saw that her eyes were red. Mrs. Vincent touched his arm as she passed. "But I must know," he said.

"The child has a headache," said my wife, quick to help. "Here is your tea, lemon, and three lumps of sugar."

"Let her alone," whispered Mrs. Vincent to Clayborne, and, apropos of the vase, began to abuse him roundly because of his incapacity to care for the best verse. This lack of imagination was why the critics declared that his historical portraits had no life in them. The giant took up the glove, and was soon deep in a contest as to what history should be.

We talked gaily over our tea, and at last went away.

Clayborne took my wife home, and I, having an errand elsewhere, went with Mrs. Vincent.

"That girl is very interesting," I said, "but not quite easy to comprehend."

"And you who are supposed to understand women! You really are exasperating sometimes."

"This is a woman, not women." I was rather proud of knowledge born of many years of varied contact with the sex.

"Sick women you may know," she added, "but not the rest."

"I did not say I understood Miss Maywood. I do not. What was the matter? She looked at the vase and at once slipped away. When we joined you she had been in tears. Am I indiscreet in asking why?"

"No; I will tell you, but any one could see why. When Clayborne saw that really beautiful thing set on an old broken-backed kitchen chair, he said, with his terrible bluntness, 'Why did you set that noble vase on a broken-backed, deformed chair?' You heard the rest. Could he have chosen a more stupid thing to say?"

"No. But really it seems a quite natural criticism."

"Yes, natural, and tactless like many natural comments. Tact consists in the suppression of the natural."

"I see," said I. "She, too, is like that, a lovely head set on a maimed body. I was dull, but I scarcely heard him. You must never tell him. He is as tender as she, but he has no tentacula. He is like a crab; all his hardness is outside. To know he hurt her would grieve him deeply. He is very sensitive as to this girl, and has grown to love the poor child with a strong, parental, protective affection."

"And she is worth it, Owen North."

It was a curious little catastrophe, and told me far too much of what Sibyl would suffer, unless with education there should develop a larger self-control and capacity to strengthen, under the inevitable trials her deformity must bring.

For a time neither of us spoke. Then Mrs. Vincent said abruptly: "I wish St. Clair would keep away from her. It is the old story. He was at Holmwood all last week. He reads to her, sings with her, and now he wants to make a rilievo of her head. Mr. Clayborne, for once, had a crumb of sense, and

said no, upon which St. Clair went into a rage, and said Clayborne had no right to deprive an artist of his natural privilege to study the beautiful."

"His rages do not last long, and what nonsense!"

"Yes; but you see—you understand me, I am sure."

"Yes, only too well; but what can I do? He is—well, who can help seeing his personal beauty? The girl will fall in love. He is so fatally attractive, and she, poor little maid!—"

"Could you not speak to him?"

"Hardly," said I. I remembered one too painful occasion when I had spoken out all of my mind to St. Clair.

"Then I must speak to her. I do so plainly foresee trouble. Yes, I shall wait. I will do nothing hastily. Ah, here we are at home. Bring Alice to dine to-morrow. Good night. Don't fail me."

I well knew that Mrs. Vincent would not at once fulfil her intention. Indeed, she might never do so. Knowing St. Clair as we did, it was not an unreasonable intention, but I felt that it was rather premature. After all, Anne Vincent's second thoughts were the wise bases of her life, and if she had always acted on her declarations as to what she thought and said was advisable she would have been a difficult wife and a nearly impossible friend. I am myself liable to fits of dullness of apprehension, and also at times to failure to see what is obvious to others. I may add that I am now and then surprised at the insight I have as to what folks are or will do. On this occasion I had to be enlightened by Anne Vincent and

my wife, who, as I soon learned, shared her friend's opinion that there might already be mischief brewing. I found it hard to believe, but after a little talk we were finally at one as to the present value of silence.

IV

ONE day in the delightful time of autumn all of us chanced to be together at Holmwood for afternoon tea. St. Clair was late, and before he came our host wished to show us the lily-pond, to make which he had turned aside the waters of the creek. He meant it to become a part of his wild garden, and desired to fill and surround it with our native aquatic plants. After seeing what he had done, we came back to the house, and soon began to talk about St. Clair's sermon, which all of us had liked. Mrs. Vincent had to own that St. Clair had dealt fairly with a text we all thought hard to handle.

"Try us with another," said I.

"No," she said; "I dislike making a kind of game of it."

"That depends, Anne," said my wife, "on how you take it—in what spirit. I am sure that no one could have dealt more reverently with the text than our friend did."

"Yes, dear, you are right. Only I wish I thought he was in earnest."

"I am sure," said Sibyl, "that I, for one, did get new and useful thoughts out of Mr. St. Clair's sermon. It may have needed a note of appeal at the close."

"Ah, my dear," said Mrs. Vincent, "that is so difficult. I heard a delightful gentleman, who was a

clergyman, say that when at the close of a sermon he came to apply a truth to the people before him, he always felt as if he were taking a liberty."

"With young preachers one feels that, but I liked this sermon," said I, "because it did leave to the intelligence of those who heard it the inference of appeal, the beautiful moral."

"We are perhaps an unusual congregation," said Clayborne, "and yet I do not see the personal appeal so apparent to you."

"He knows too much already," laughed St. Clair, who had just come in. "Let us leave it untold to punish him for always knowing so much more than we."

Clayborne protested amid continued merriment, and at last retired into the recesses of his own mind to search for the needed appeal or the missing moral.

As my wife still insisted on her wish for that text on which no man could with relevancy preach, Mrs. Vincent said: "Well, my dear Alice, if you really want to have a competition in preaching, I will present you with a text. I fancy that no one has ever used it, or ever will use it. It may serve to put an end to your ambitions."

"And this impossible text," said St. Clair, "is—"

"Oh," cried Mrs. Vincent, "it is—but you are out of it."

"Good! I am *hors concours*."

"Yes; we agree to that," said I.

"My text is, 'So Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them.'"

"I am very well out of it," cried St. Clair; "I see

no interest in your text. The man was a thief, and was set at liberty. That is all."

My wife laughed. "The absence of imagination renders some minds very unproductive."

It much amused us to hear St. Clair thus rated. He, too, enjoyed it.

"Oh, go on. My imagination goes on frolics, gets drunk, goes mad, but is always about, and has the sense to know when its key will not unlock things."

"It is from want of knowledge this time," said Clayborne. "As you quote it, the text is barren; but not when one considers the laws of the Romans. You will find in—"

"Please, please!" cried Anne Vincent. "Do not help them with the sermon. I protest."

"But I see so clearly. It is a lack of charity to fail to contribute essential knowledge."

Mrs. Vincent looked up, amused at this cumbrous statement. "Then do not contribute your clearer view to our lesser insight—or outsight; is there such a word?"

"No need for it, and, dear Mrs. Vincent, I am dumb."

"Who will do it?" said she.

No one claimed this doubtful privilege.

"Alas!" cried my wife, "are we so bankrupt of wits?"

"You should have accepted Clayborne's charity," said St. Clair.

"Charity?" returned Clayborne. "Another cup, Mrs. Vincent. Charity; perhaps I misapplied the word."

I saw the twinkle of self-amused mischief in St. Clair's face as he said, "I know a nice little story about charity out of your favorite sayer of sooths, El-Din-Attar."

"Well," said Clayborne, "go on. It is not very long, I trust."

"No," laughed St. Clair; "I shall never compete with you as to quantity; as to quality, that is another affair."

"Oh, go on," said Clayborne.

"It is a story," cried Mrs. Vincent, drawing nearer.

"Haroun-al-Raschid was again of a mind to play beggar. He betook himself to the gate of the palace, where, even after dark, many went in and out. Presently came forth the court poet, Mustapha, and with him the court fool. The caliph made himself small as they approached, and said: 'Alms to the starving. The caliph, men say, hath made you both rich to-day. Give as it was given.'

"'That were to want respect,' said Mustapha, 'to abandon so soon what his mightiness the protector of the poor has given. In the words of a wise poet of the infidel, "Sing a song of sixpence," which is to say, write a great poem like mine, and collect of lovers of song, such as Haroun the Magnificent, thy proportioned pay, as I have done.'"

"What stuff!" said Clayborne.

"Said the caliph: 'I understand sixpence to be a very modest sum; that must be the usual pay of infidel poets. Thou art not generous, but thou hast given me to-night the coin of reflection. The poor of soul are the poor of pocket.'

"'To give the coin of reflection,' said the poet, 'is

my business and my delight. Thou art welcome to all that I have.'

"'Alas!' cried the beggar, 'but will it buy me kabobs or so much as the tail of a fish?'

"Upon this he turned to the poet's companion, and said: 'O Fool, thou, too, art rich to-day. Let me have a penny; I am hungry.'

"'I must justify the proverb,' cried the fool, '"A fool and his money—"' and gave him a handful of gold sequins.

"'I shall pray for you at morning,' said Haroun. 'And now I have emptied the head of wisdom and the purse of folly.'

"'True,' said the fool; 'I have not a penny for supper; I gave you all. Give me alms, a trifle, I pray you.'

"'Not I,' cried the beggar; 'that were to show disrespect to the proverb you so wisely quoted. I, at least, am no fool.'

"'You rascal!' cried the poet, laughing, 'give me back a little of my wisdom.'

"'I have given to both of you,' returned Haroun, 'and ye know it not.'

"'By Allah!' said the fool, 'the man must be a poet. Let us go to the tavern and drink of the wisdom called wine.'

"Thus saying, they went away. The next day, in the divan, Haroun said to Mustapha, 'Did a beggar ask alms of thee last night?'

"'Yes, Sustainer of the universe, Prop of the stars. It is as thou hast said.'

"'And you gave not! You also asked alms of him.'

"'I did, O Inventor of wisdom.'

"'What did the beggar give?'

"The poet shook in his sandals. 'O Caliph, he said he had given; I knew not what he meant.'

"'A pretty poet!' cried Haroun. 'I, too, am a sufi poet. I will interpret. He gave you both the noble alms which Allah gives to all men, the alms called opportunity. Henceforth thou, O Poet, art my court Fool. And thou, O Fool, be thou my Poet. Abide now in the shadow of reflection, and find me a rhyme for opportunity.'

"'Immunity!' cried the fool, laughing; 'forgive my brother!'

"'Thy brother?' asked the caliph.

"'Yes, my foster-brother. We were both fed from the breast of folly; all poets are.'"

"How do you do it?" asked Miss Maywood.

Even Clayborne was amused, and called it wisdom, and so we strayed into other chat.

A few days later our friends dined with us. Clayborne and I played chess after dinner, and the rest were talking, when the servant brought me a large envelop marked "Immediate." I said, "Pardon me, Clayborne," and opened it. I looked around, and said: "Who wrote this? It is a sermon,—hardly that,—a something on Mrs. Vincent's text. Who wrote it?"

St. Clair and Clayborne denied any share in it; I certainly had none.

"Was it—is it yours, Miss Maywood?"

She said: "No, indeed. Read it; then we can guess."

"Let me see it," said Alice. "It is type-written and mailed to you, Owen. Let us hear it."

"By all means," said Clayborne.

Upon this we settled ourselves to listen, and I read. It began with the text, "So Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them." "In four places this man, who says no word of or for himself, is spoken of. He, it is probable, was, like our Saviour, known by the commonly used name Jesus, Jesus Barabbas. The Jews desired his release, as Pilate knew. He is mentioned variously as a notable prisoner, a robber, a murderer during insurrection, a leader of sedition. It seems fair to infer that, if a Jew, he may have been one who, during unsuccessful revolt, had committed what the Roman rule regarded as murder. If so, the Jews would naturally have been inclined to think other than ill of him. He may not have been a murderer, or even a bad man. Before the Roman procurator, Pilate, in the hall of judgment, stood this Jesus Barabbas, the man set free, and that other Jesus, the Christ, in his white Syrian robe. 'So Pilate released Barabbas unto them.' What thoughts were in the mind of Christ as he looked on the man in whose place he was to die? In this tragic hour we seem hardly aware of any one but the silent Christ, who had said his say, and would speak no more to man. The released criminal, who may have been innocent of anything but hatred of the oppressors of his race, has for me a share in the historic interest of that memorable hour. He was free. Astonished and relieved, he, too, must surely have looked in turn at the unmoved figure before Pilate. He must have heard of him, and no doubt shared the disbelief in his message held by all in that judgment-

hall. He could not have been human and remained without some thought of the strange situation which gave him back to hope and life. Then he turned and went out, glad of the fresh air of freedom. How can we fail to imagine the rest? Did his interest cease here? I cannot so believe. Among the many who stood to see the Christ go past to die, stood Barabbas by the wayside. As the Christ went past he set his eyes on the man Barabbas. I think they said, 'Follow thou me,' and the man arose and went after him. When the night was deepening around the mournful group below the cross, afar off sat the malefactor. Above hung the tortured body of the dead Christ. He, too, was released by a greater than Pilate—Death. Then one touched the shoulder of the man Barabbas. He turned in alarm. 'Have no fear; thou art the first for whom he died, and he died for many. Go, and sin no more.' Upon this Barabbas arose and girded his loins, and went forth into the desert, and was seen no more of those who had known him."

"Is that all?" said Alice.

"Yes, all," said I. "It is hardly to be called a sermon."

"I do not think he was a robber," said Mrs. Vincent. "I like to believe that he was not."

"If," said Clayborne, "he were, as he might have been, only a rebel against Roman rule, he may have fallen in the great siege of Jerusalem, a leader of his ruined race."

"Or through life have followed forever those sad eyes. Who can say?" It was St. Clair who spoke.

"And who wrote it?" said I.

No one could or would say. We talked it over for a while, making vain guesses.

When, later, St. Clair had risen and was about to take his leave, he said: "I was stupid as to that text; but why did the writer end his sermon just when it had brought him to the point where the story, with an ever-enlarging moral, takes in so much of life? A lost chance, a lost chance!"

"What do you mean?" said we. "Go on."

"No," he said; "not I. Good night"; and that unstated wisdom never became ours.

Clayborne and I went back to our unfinished game, leaving the women still earnestly guessing at what St. Clair meant. Vincent watched us in silence. I won at last.

Said Vincent, "You went wrong with that knight, Clayborne."

"I did."

"I find it hard not to criticize openly a game when I am looking on," said Vincent.

"That reminds me," said I, "of what General Sheridan told me. I had asked him about the Franco-Prussian war. He said that, being with King William, he saw, and could not fail to anticipate, more or less of Moltke's plans and the results. He said he was like an expert watching a game of chess; that the failure to see how to use cavalry was remarkable on both sides, and that he sometimes found it hard to keep quiet."

"I am sure he did," said Vincent, "though he could be as silent as Grant."

"That is saying a good deal. Dr. B—— told me

that in two years of constant intercourse with Grant he only once heard him express an opinion of any officer on either side."

"And that once?" queried Clayborne.

"It was at Donaldson. Dr. B—— complained that his hospitals were so near the Confederate lines that a sally would certainly put them in peril. General Grant said: 'Be easy. I know the generals in command. They are thinking far more as to how they shall stay inside than how they shall get out.' And yet," continued I, "Grant liked to talk. But that was after the war. Another game?"

"No; we must go."

When we were alone, we three, my wife, my cigar, and this writer, I said to Alice: "You wrote that little poetic commentary. It is not a sermon."

"Yes; I thought you would know. I want you to like it."

"I liked it very much."

Although Alice found it agreeable to relate her thought on paper, she had no ambition to be seen in print. When I said that I liked what she modestly described as a shred of a possible sermon, she was pleased. She often complained that to express herself in speech was never satisfactory, but that when she wrote she felt assured of power to state her thought. This is also my own case. She said, "You will not tell?" I said no, but that the slow mechanism of Clayborne's mind would be sure to grind out the truth, and, in fact, this proved to be as I predicted.

V

WE were again together after dinner, but this time it was in the Vincents' drawing-room. Miss Maywood was not with us.

"Tell us some new thing, Owen North," said Mrs. Vincent, turning round on the piano-stool. She had been singing capriciously, as birds sing, bits of songs.

"Some new thing? That is desirable," said Clayborne, "or not."

"What a challenge! Some new thing! I cannot. I was just now thinking over St. Clair's sermon. It took me back to my remembrance of a sermon I once heard. It was during the third year of the war. I was with Phillips Brooks on the coast of Maine. We went to a Methodist meeting-house on Sunday morning. I have been trying to recall the text."

"Can you recall the sermon?" said my wife.

"Yes; after a fashion."

"Then tell it, and let us find the text to fit it."

"Ah," said Mrs. Vincent, "given the sermon, to find the text. That might often be difficult."

"What the preacher desired was to make clear that we should always do our duty without regard to consequences. He assured his hearers that very often they would find it easier than to shirk it. He said:

There is a ship ashore, we will say; got to get her men off. It 's right risky. Well, so is shipwreck of a man's soul. You 've got to choose.' He had many illustrations. He described the battle between the Israelites and the Amalekites. He said that Moses considered the fight through a telescope. This nearly upset even the technical gravity of the famous preacher, my companion. The fishermen and sailors were undisturbed. What more natural to them than a telescope? 'Do your duty,' he said, 'and you 'll often find the Lord lettin' you off easy. I was chaplain last year to a Maine regiment. Our time was out. We were asked to stay on and volunteer for a fight next day. I told the boys, and some said no—only a few, mostly married men. The rest stayed right on. Next day at dawn I said a few strengthenin' words, and then we went on. It was a little outlyin' fort, south of Petersburg. Well, we rushed it. My friends, the Rebs had left. There was n't no one there. We did n't lose a man, and we saved our souls alive. This is how God is good to a man that does his duty. Alive or dead, that man is safe. That 's so whenever a man 's got to take risks on land or sea. Just you think of that, my friends, when life is stormy, and your soul 's on a lee shore. The right-doin' man has always got two strings to his bow. You may get out and be none the worse, or you may die and never come to any shore but where the black waves of death break on the golden sands of heaven; and the hand that will be stretched out to you, there ain't need to tell you whose it will be.' This is all I can recall."

"That old proverb," said Vincent, "of the bow-

strings, which comes down from the bowmen of Cressy or Agincourt, has had a long life. I found another in one of Queen Bess's letters. She says: 'He who seeketh two strings to one bowe may shute strong, but never strait.' There is a small literature of proverbs about the bow. I find your sermon much to my mind."

"And," said Clayborne, "you did not make it up?"

"No; I have tried to render it fairly. That it is verbally accurate I cannot say. Find me his text. That I have lost."

We discussed this want in vain. All that we could be sure of was that the text must have suggested the sermon. At last Vincent said to his wife, "You expect Le Clerc to-night, Anne?"

I knew that she did, as she had previously spoken to me of it, and was, as usual with her, greatly excited by the expectation of any quite novel experience. I had looked, as I entered, to see what fresh dramatic setting there would be, and had observed, as Vincent came in after our arrival, a look of mirth on his telltale face. Her habit of slightly changing her drawing-room to suit her sense of the fitness of things was well known to all of us. It was purely to satisfy herself, and was without the least affectation. I understood at a glance. Le Clerc was to talk about things mystical. The *mise en scène* was at times elaborate, as I had once occasion to observe, and have elsewhere stated. To-night it was simple.

Years before St. Clair had sent from Japan two historically famous balls of crystal. These were well known in Japan as the Rock of Remembrance and the

Rock of Reflection. They were fully ten inches in diameter. One was of smoky quartz; the other was a crystal sphere of delicate rose-color. When these reached Clayborne with a parlous bill, he paid with a groan, and sent them to Anne Vincent.

And now the Rock of Reflection lay to the left of the blazing hearth, on a cushion of fawn-tinted velvet, and was glowing like a glorious, ruddy moon, mysteriously beautiful. Midway in the room stood a small, round Chippendale table of dark mahogany. It was an unusual bit of furniture, because the rim was a narrow edge of silver. This table commonly held the roses Anne Vincent loved so well. On this occasion there was a shallow dish of pearl-gray china, and afloat in it half a dozen water-lilies. These were wide open, as they had no natural business to be at night, but, as St. Clair once remarked, flowers and people did for Anne Vincent what they never did for any one else. Beside this dish was a slim Greek vase, in which stood a few grotesque orchids, rich in color and as strange as gargoyles.

As I stood admiring this suggestive and, for Anne Vincent, quite moderate setting, she herself, replying to her husband's question, said:

"Yes; I think I hear Mr. Le Clerc's voice in the hall. What a queer falsetto! He has promised, if Fred does not object, that I shall see a famous medium—oh, not now, of course."

"I think it all very silly," said Clayborne.

"At least it may amuse you," she said.

"It will not, my dear lady. But it may have other values."

The gentleman who entered was a tall man, slightly bent, a professor of physics, and well known in the world of science. He spoke to us in turn quietly, in a sharp voice of unpleasing tones. He apologized for being late, and added that he had only a few minutes' time, but had come to place himself at Mrs. Vincent's command.

Upon this we fell to talking about spiritualism, mind-reading, and the like. At last Vincent said: "Le Clerc, you have seen a good deal of these matters. Is there any one thing among them of which you are sure?"

He replied with evident caution: "I think I have seen a man read cards which he could not see. Thus, if you chose a card from a new pack, and held it up so that he saw only the back of your hand, and you the face of the card, he was often successful in naming the card. I cannot see how he could have tricked me, and in justice I should add that I have done it myself, but not nearly as well as he. He professed to be able to name also any card I had in mind. In this he was less fortunate."

"Let me say something, Mr. Le Clerc," said I. "This is an exhibition of so-called telepathy in its simplest form. Suppose we admit its truth. What one man can do must represent a power possessed in some degree by all men. It may be small in most men, or in abeyance. It must be in the mass of men a quality, a capacity, on the way to fuller development. All our abilities, all sensual perceptivity, must have gone through endless ranges of acuteness, and always, in their evolution, certain persons must have

had this or that sense in a larger degree than the less-developed mass of their fellows."

"If we accept the fact as stated, that seems reasonable," said Clayborne, "but in the cases you mention the organ of sense existed. It was recognizable. What is the mechanism in this present case? Where or what is the new sense thus used? For it is through the senses alone that we get news from without."

"Who can guess?" said Le Clerc. "There are many parts of the brain to which we assign no function. I am not sufficiently sure of the facts to go further."

"Do you know," said Vincent, "how you do this thing?"

"I do not. I am rarely fortunate; at times I fail entirely. This makes it hard to condition, and thus unlike the facts of outside nature. I have given up its study for this reason, and, too, because it affects me disagreeably."

"Can you," said my wife, "tell us how you seemed to do it? It cannot be chance."

"No," said Clayborne, decisively.

"I seemed to see the card," Le Clerc said. "It looked larger than the real card. Once I stated the number, but was unable to tell the color. It requires a certain amount of time. I cannot succeed if the person who holds the card does not know the card and does not think of it. In fact, most of the larger pretensions as to this matter break down under severe tests, and I am still in doubt."

"I have," said I, "at times suspected myself of

having a certain amount of capacity to know what people are thinking. It may have been that I was mistaken."

"For my part," said St. Clair, "I hope it will remain an undeveloped capacity. To read at will the minds even of those we love would be disastrous to happiness."

"Or at times quite the reverse," said my wife.

"But," returned St. Clair, "imagine a world from which speech was gone, and where this power had become universal. To lie would be impossible. The whole fabric of civilization would crumble; war would be impossible, love a farce."

"Even nonsense may suggest thought," said Clayborne, who was apt to take St. Clair literally. "Individual capacity to conceal thought is an essential of civilized life. The savage conceals nothing. This would be retrogression. The barbarian is willingly open-minded. We should be self-revealed unwillingly."

"Perhaps," said Vincent, "this power, if it be one, is, as we assume to have it, an abnormal thing, like those excessive attributes of the senses acquired in disease."

"But," said Clayborne, "this other could not be any excess of a sense known to us. It must be a radically different sense."

"Yes," returned Vincent, "you are right. Nor have I any, even the dimmest, consciousness of any unused power to apprehend another's thought. Owen North may have. He said so."

"Oh," cried my wife, "but I do not think Owen is in the least abnormal."

At this we laughed, Le Clerc also declining to be thus classed.

"At all events," said Clayborne, "no possible good can come of these investigations. If taken seriously, their study should be in hands which are competent for the work. Few are. The mere man of science, the physicist,—horrid word,—has been endlessly fooled by the trickery of so-called spiritualists. As Le Clerc has said,—I think you said that,—one cannot condition the facts."

"Hysterical and hypnotic telepathy," said I, "have repeatedly taken in some of the ablest of my profession. The study may some day be more fortunate. Now men in general get no good, and often harm, out of attempts along the lines of these too vague phenomena."

"And yet," said Mrs. Vincent, "such small facts as we have just now heard do give one a sense of the possibility of mind directly communicating with mind, and so of the possibility of our minds being affected by those who, being dead, speak no more the ordinary tongue of man."

"No," said Clayborne, "that by no means follows. You infer too much."

"Let us then wholesomely stop here," said I; "I quite decline a plunge into the idiotic chaos of spiritualism."

"He," said Clayborne, "who needs that help to faith must strangely want the power to read aright his own nature and the great world."

This was gravely said by Clayborne, and was one of the frank statements of his calmly held beliefs to which we rarely heard him commit himself.

Said Le Clerc: "I busied myself once with many of these phenomena. Some I thought at one time honest facts; others mere obvious trickery. I gave it all up, and came to see that some, even of the ablest and most honest of the men given over to these pursuits, got at last into a condition of utter incapacity to disbelieve things which were clearly absurd, such as the so-called materialization of spirits."

"If," said I, "it be full of pitfalls for men of intellect, it is a slough of mental disaster for feebler minds. I have seen in the followers of these ways much sad disorder of mind."

"I have a very mild desire," said Clayborne, "to see once a spiritual display—séance, they call it, I think."

"Listen, Fred," cried Mrs. Vincent; "even Mr. Clayborne shares my curiosity."

"I am sorry for him, Anne. I shall not stand in your way, but let it be once, and only once."

"I could arrange for it," said Le Clerc. "I gave up all personal interest in this matter long ago, but I know many of these people."

"I should like," said my wife, "that we should be unknown to the medium."

"That is easily managed," said Le Clerc.

Like Vincent, I rather strongly objected to this folly. I agreed, however, that we would be present, and predicted that one sitting would satisfy all concerned. The famous Seybert commission was enough for me. Its report is as amusing as a volume of "Punch," and more instructive.

"I will see about it," said Le Clerc, "and now I

must go. I called merely to know what Mrs. Vincent wanted."

As we, too, were about to leave, I said to Vincent: "I have had a visit from Xerxes Crofter, my Western railway brigand. You will grieve to hear that he is still entirely well. After a noble career of destruction in the West he moved to New York. He is here just now, to my amusement, to see Clayborne, who, as you know, owns a coal-mine in Ohio, and a little branch road, which is a feeder of Xerxes's great railway system. Clayborne thinks the rates on the main line excessive, and threatens a big fight. When Xerxes heard that Clayborne was my friend, he came hither to have a talk with him. Both are rather cross, and Clayborne happy over the imminence of a row."

"I should like to see that robber," said Vincent, "but not in my own house. Probably Clayborne will ask me to be present at their conference. One would like, Owen, to talk frankly with a man who has stolen fifty millions."

"It may be possible with Crofter. He is a man with no end of bad qualities, and an underlying stratum of something better."

"That of course," returned Vincent. "The giants of criminal finance are rarely without some fractional capacity to imitate their betters. That is no real gain. Men wholly bad are less dangerous."

"Well, you will be interested. That I promise. The man has learned many things since I first saw him. I think I said that Clayborne has asked him to dinner."

"Yes, it does not surprise me. He would ask a

murderer if he wanted to study him. He has none of our feeling as to the social sacredness of the act of feeding. After it he will be as remorseless in his dealings with this potential scamp as if he had never given him of his salt. Your wife is waiting. By-by!"

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VI

THE next day I saw Xerxes. Three years of the life of what he at first called the "meetropolis," and the vigor of reacquired health, together with another influence, had wrought notable changes in the outer ways, dress, and language of the great railroad-wrecker. He still had the look of animal power. The ursine appearance of awkward strength was still present; the huge hands, the strong, prominent muscles of the jaw, like those of the Bonapartes, the rolling walk of the plantigrade, all were as before. Vincent remarked later that he must always have been a person of varied and unexpectable capabilities, and even of undeveloped tastes. Courageous in action, outspoken rather than frank, lavish rather than generous, at times amazingly impulsive, he was, beneath all, the wild beast of the jungles of finance, strong, adroit, and merciless. "He has also the Christianity of humor," said St. Clair, at a still later date, "and that," observed the poet, "does prevent a man from being consistently inhuman." This queer comment set me to thinking whether the great criminal natures I had met in my time were ever endowed with this quality of humor.

Mr. Xerxes Crofter came into my library at morning, and before accepting a seat, set his huge hands

on the table and stood still. I rose and said: "Good morning. Sit down."

Without returning my salutation, he said: "Can't do it, doctor; got to meet some railroad men. I came here to talk with your friend Clayborne. He says I must dine with him to-morrow; afterward he will see about it. That is n't business. I came here to get the better of him about a coal deal." Here he paused.

"Well?" said I.

"Confound it! Where I was born you can't shoot a man in his own cabin. He won't talk business at table, I guess?"

"No, certainly not. Rest at ease about that."

"But after I feed and drink his champagne he will know all about me. When I eat and drink I 'm a rather loose-languaged sort of man. Now he can't judge my hand."

"But you will know him, too."

"Well, maybe. We won't play chess if I know X. Crofter." He laughed as he recalled the incident of our first encounter.

"I am to dine with you," said I; "no one else."

"Good! Then you will take care of this innocent orphan. I forgot his lawyer is to dine with us, too, a man named Vincent. I heard him argue a case once. He talked the gentlest you ever heard, but, Lord! when he was through with that man, and the court rose,—it was in Arkansas; the Supreme Court, you know,—the fellow followed him out on to the sidewalk. Joe Bristed had killed two or more, and now we all knew he was red-blood-mad. Says he to

this Vincent, 'No man can talk that way about me and live,' and with this he drew a Colt, and folks squandered. Well, Vincent he just stood still with his hands at his sides and looked at Joe. All he said was: "I made it clear that you are a thief. Now I know that you are a coward.' 'Great Scott!' says Joe, 'you are a brave man,' and he put out his hand. This Vincent he just took no kind of notice of him, and walked away as cool as a cucumber. Darned if I know why cucumbers are cool."

"And Joe?"

"Oh, says he, 'Busted, boys,' and gave it up. I want to see that man. Ever tell you that story? No? He did n't? That 's queer. It was in the papers, though, but the editor got punctuated—full stop, you know. Good joke that! Well, I just came in to show myself. I 'm as right as a young grizzly. I suppose it is white tie and full uniform? Yes? Good-by."

I drove Vincent out next day to this singular dinner-party. On the way we talked over my Western patient.

"He has ruined many better men," said Vincent, "and now he has quit plundering and retired from brigandage with some incredible amount of plunder. He has corrupted courts, bought legislation, bribed men, and caused tears enough to drown him. And his grandchildren may marry yours. Success covers a multitude of sins. And this devil goes to church,—meeting, my wife would say,—and some of the preachers fawn at his feet. I should like to talk frankly with a man like this man."

"It might, it may, be entirely possible. I think I have already said so."

"I cannot see, Owen, how one could do it. I mean talk frankly. How surely our manners protect a man from the shafts of social opinion, and how easily we in America condone or forget the crimes of finance! In England one slip as to money matters will ruin the career of a politician. With us it is strangely passed over and soon forgotten. But let a man with us go notoriously wrong about women, and he is ruined."

"Yes, and, on the other hand, in England that sin does not affect a career."

"Is that due to the vast influence of women in our national life? I do not think they feel as you or I do, that looseness as to money matters is a more influential, a more radical evil in public life. The one form of crime personally appeals to them; the other does not."

"That may be so."

"Here we are. I never before dined with a complete rascal."

"He is sadly incomplete, Vincent."

We were twenty minutes before our time. Clayborne was dressing. We walked into the drawing-room, and at last, as Vincent wanted to look at a book, into the great library. There, to my surprise, was Crofter, standing in front of a replica of Stuart's "Washington." The Western man, too, was before his time. He turned as we entered, and I introduced these two most dissimilar men.

Then, and later, I was surprised to see how much

Crofter had changed. He was in full evening dress, and as to his attire not otherwise remarkable except for a pair of costly sapphire shirt-studs. Except when he told some wild Western story, he used far better English than he had employed in the days of our earlier acquaintance. The gradual alteration puzzled me, until I learned that a well-known and clever widow in New York had undertaken the task of taming and civilizing this sturdy brute. She ended by marrying him, and did really effect such a notable alteration in his dress, language, and manners as is possible only when an intelligent and well-bred lady is resolute to influence an American of Crofter's type. She was a refined woman, and, I should add, was honestly in love with my powerful grizzly.

"That is one of the best replicas I ever saw," he said. "Pity Stuart did not sign his pictures. I make a point of that when I buy a picture. I like it autographed."

"Do you think, Mr. Crofter," said I, "that this portrait gives one any idea of the man Washington?"

"Now, that is just the kind of thing I should like to ask Mr. Vincent," returned Crofter; "he knows men and he knows pictures."

Vincent, too much a man of the world to betray himself, was, I knew well, resenting inwardly this intimate judgment as to his qualities as a student of men and their portraits. But it was scarcely possible not to be interested by Crofter. His mind was vigorous, his opinions bold and freshly original, his mode of expression at times uncommon, but always effective.

Vincent replied: "I think that if we take the man Washington far on in mid-life, as now at last we know him, and were to construct a face to express the man and his life, it would not be the face of such a picture as Stuart drew."

"They ought," said Crofter, "to have hired Reynolds to have come over and painted him; and there is no great painting of Lincoln."

"It is one thing," said I, "to paint a man's face; quite another to paint on it his character. Usually, in these days of concealment and self-control, only a part of a man's nature gets written clearly on his face. That is the interest of the sixteenth-century portraits. The time unmuzzled all passions, all personal qualities. It was fatal to Italy; it was fortunate for the artist."

"I am not sure you are right as to this portrait," said Crofter. "Washington was an out-of-doors man, and I do notice that men who live in the saddle and under the sun don't get their faces wrinkle-written like men that live indoors. You just get a light sketch of the man on his features. He don't draw himself strong. This Washington only looks grave and serious. He don't show for what he went through. And then there 's another thing. His kind of bred men don't scrawl what they are all over their faces. Ever notice that, Mr. Vincent? Now, your face don't give any clear notion of what you are."

"I do not think I have," said Vincent, shortly. "I was wondering what Washington would have been had he lived to-day."

"Hard question that," returned Crofter. "He certainly was a large man. I don't suppose he had the

outfit for our time. But then, no time is the boss of a big man. He was a hard, steady fighter; he never did have quiet horses to ride. Had a hard time from the start. His own State did n't altogether want him. He kept goin' to school all his life. He made himself if ever a man did."

"What you say as to his own State is true," said Clayborne, coming up behind us as we stood before the portrait. "But how did you know that?" The scholar was as much astonished as Vincent. "What the deuce," he said later, "has this fellow to do with history?" I fancy he considered it disrespectful to the historic Muse.

"The planters did not want him," said Crofter. "Did you ever see 'Meade's Diary,' Mr. Vincent?"

"Never. What of it?"

"I happened on it last year. I 've taken to picking up books about the Revolution. I have time to read now. Novels don't get me. Meade says they wanted Colonel Byrd of Westover, and declares that he was the bigger man of the two."

Vincent, who knew our history rarely well, said, "I never saw the diary."

"Glad to send it to you. It was privately printed. Can't buy it."

"Don't trouble yourself," said Vincent. He had no mind to be under obligations to Crofter.

"It is no trouble. There is another—oh, some autograph letters. I 'll send them all."

I saw Vincent's look of annoyance, and was amused. He had, however, no chance to defend himself further, for at this moment dinner was announced.

VII

I HAVE always had a fancy for the study of character. Novel social contacts offer fresh opportunities for such study. A new situation becomes a laboratory in which one may consider the reactions of one man upon another. If people are diverse, yet positive, the results are the more apt to be distinct and valuable. Here were three very definite people. Each of them was typically peculiar. In the laboratory certain agents which come in contact chemically decline to alter or to be altered, and remain neutrally indifferent. This idea was in my mind as I watched Vincent and Crofter. The Western man was of gladiatorial make. Audacity, endurance, and intelligent power were clearly to be read on the strong-featured face below the wire-like, resolute curls of his abundant hair. He was now, as I said, on guard, attentive. Only once did I note any trace of the crude society out of which he came. When Clayborne gave signs of leaving the table, Crofter, who was listening intently to Vincent, put out a searching paw, in evident pursuit of the boarding-house napkin-ring of youthful days. I was sure of this, because he had automatically folded and rolled up his napkin. He shook it out and cast it on the table as our host rose. In contrast to Crofter was the refinement of

Vincent's familiar face, with its look of reserved power, and its suggestion of sternness in mouth and chin. There was a queer look of innocence about the large blue eyes of the man of the financial prize-ring, but Vincent's eyes of lucent gray possessed mysterious influences for those who loved, hated, or respected this sensitive and high-bred gentleman. Would these two prove too socially neutral? It seemed likely to be so. Once or twice I tried to come in as the third reagent, which in a chemist's solution of inactive compounds has the capacity to cause abrupt and interesting interchange of the constituent elements. I had no such luck.

The champagne was evidently to Crofter's liking; he asked if it were not a vintage wine. Clayborne, who to appearance was no more affected by wine than by beer, which was his ordinary drink, set his guest a sad example. Crofter took of the gay vintage, as it seemed to me, in excess. Perhaps this novel society made him forget his usually moderate habits. In fact, I had forbidden him to use stimulants, and he had been singularly obedient. He talked well, and at first listened quietly, but I suspect that the increasing effects of our host's champagne may account in some degree for what happened after dinner.

No word was said as to railroads or money. New York had bored him at first. Yes, he had had to find occupation, and had taken to buying pictures, but only landscapes or, now and then, portraits. Vincent's taste was apparently well known to Crofter, for, with his usual businesslike turn, he had employed

his secretary to make a list of notable private collections. Vincent's was not large, but of remarkable interest.

"You have a little Gainsborough I bid on once," said Crofter. "It was too dear. I waited. When I thought it would have dropped to my notion of value, I found you had bought it. If ever you feel like selling it, I won't stand on price."

I saw Vincent stiffen himself a little. "Thank you," he said. "Mrs. Vincent gave it to me. I, too, thought it rather dear."

"Now," said Crofter, "is n't that just like a woman? You wanted it, and she never thought of the price." The faintest possible flush came out on my friend's cheeks. "How much did she give for it?" added Xerxes.

"I do not know," said Vincent.

"Might guess," said Crofter.

I began to suspect, as I listened, that the wine was already beginning to disturb Crofter's too recently acquired respect for the decencies of social life.

"When can I see your pictures?" he asked.

"I can hardly say," returned Vincent. "I am going to try a case in Pittsburg to-morrow."

"Perhaps Mrs. Vincent will be so kind as to let me see them." My man was, in little as in big things, persistent.

Clayborne, satisfied as long as the talk kept alive, listened, but was quite outside of the game. He was very much attached to Vincent, but never fully understood him.

When Crofter said that perhaps Mrs. Vincent

would gratify his wish, Vincent replied, "I will ask Mrs. Vincent."

But now it dawned upon the man that somehow he was, as he would have said, being shunted. His education in feminine hands had progressed far enough to enable him to be dimly conscious of his social mistakes, even when he was unable to understand fully how he had blundered. He said at once: "I won't trouble her, I guess; perhaps sometime I may be more lucky. Come and see my pictures when you have an idle hour in New York."

I read in Vincent's face a danger-signal, but he returned quietly, "I shall hope to have the pleasure. And, by the way, Clayborne," he said, turning to our host, "have you decided where to put the vase?"

After this the talk wandered as we discussed sport, salmon-fishing, and the like. Crofter found the winters in New York rather tedious. "As long as a man can kill things he can get on; but war and gambling are the two things best worth doing for real excitement, and, after all, war is just a big kind of bet. Was in it awhile as a commissary officer."

"Then you saw no fighting?" said I.

"Oh, did n't I? The last year I got into the artillery. The fact is, I like excitement, danger. I guess you do too, Mr. Vincent."

He did, as I well knew.

"Yes," said Vincent; "I have that folly."

"Thought so. An artillery duel, or poker for large stakes when you have no money, are the two finest things I know—well, the best worth doing."

Vincent smiled, conscious that the guest was, as he

himself would have said, on a down grade, and the brakes out of order. I said that I hated war, and then spoke of the wearisome life of the camps, upon which Clayborne remarked that he had never been conscious of the thing for which we have no word, *ennui*.

"Indeed," said Crofter, "is that so? As long as I can gamble I am never bored."

"I myself never could see the charm of uncertainty," said Clayborne, "and for many reasons I dislike gambling."

"Yes," said Crofter; "one is, you 've got to pay up. But what about chess, doctor?" There was a gleam of amusement in the rugged face.

"Hush, hush!" said I, laughing. "That is forbidden ground."

"Ah, I see. All right. Did I ever tell you what came of your advice to teach my big Irishman poker?"

"No," said I, glad to turn the talk, for none of my friends had heard from me of that famous game of chess in which I had won back my railroad stock.

"What was it?" said Vincent, quick to note my slight embarrassment.

"Well, when you told me to go to bed for two months, I did. When you saw me again, you remember, I asked you what on earth I was to do to amuse myself. You see, Mr. Vincent, every night I lost or won at the club a hundred dollars or so, and that was about my entire amusement. In comes the doctor, and says he, 'Teach Mickey Maguire to play poker.' Mickey was my nurse, and a good one, too."

"'What for?' says I.

"'Watermelon-seeds,' says you.

"Well, I did. Mickey was an old army orderly, and he took to poker natural, like a young mule takes to kickin'. After a bit it got monotonous. So then I gave Mickey a thousand dollars to gamble with. This time there was some fun in it. I cleaned out Mickey in a week—money, wages, and all, down to his tooth-brush. When he lost that I lent him fifty dollars. By this time Mickey had got his education. In a month he had it all back, and three thousand besides. Then Mrs. Mickey sailed in and took it away, and put it in the bank, and there was Mick cleaned out again. Mrs. Mick said if he ever gambled any more she would get a divorce. About this time I was up and well, so I put Mick to work to superintend a mine in Montana."

"Did he do it well?" said Clayborne, much amused.

"Well, I guess so. A man that can play poker like Mickey can do anything. Life 's only a big gamble, gentlemen, and all its insides are little gambles. Marriage is the worst."

On this we rose, laughing, and followed Clayborne into the library. Vincent, lingering behind, whispered: "That fellow's cure must sit heavy on your conscience, Owen. I wish Mrs. Vincent had heard the talk, but I shall never tell her, never. She has no social morals fit to stand up against her curiosity. She would insist on seeing him."

"I think that likely. I suspect, Fred, that our grizzly has begun to feel the large liberty of wine."

"Yes, very clearly. Ah, there is St. Clair."

At all times at home with any of us, and especially with Clayborne, St. Clair might chance to come in on a formal dinner, at bedtime, or at breakfast. He had walked out in the dusk of evening, and now lay at easy length on a lounge. He rose as we entered.

"Mr. Crofter, Mr. St. Clair."

I saw St. Clair shrink and lift one foot a little as the broad paw of Xerxes closed on his hand. The grip was meant to emphasize the satisfaction the Western man felt.

"I am very pleased to see you, Mr. St. Clair. I bought that 'Diana' of yours from Overton."

St. Clair liked all forms of praise.

"I hope she will not move again."

"No, sir; she is one of the family."

"Will you have a cigar?" asked our host, and we fell into chairs about the fire.

"Tell you about Diana. My old aunt came on last week. She nearly fell down when she saw Mrs. Diana in the hall. She gave me a fine rating for indecency. By George! when I came down to breakfast the next day I found she had tied a red flannel petticoat around the lady's waist. 'Most killed my English butler. Never knew him to grin before or since."

"I know of several statues which would be the better for clothes," said St. Clair, laughing gaily.

"It was comical," returned Crofter; "I compromised on a screen while she stayed."

"I should have liked to have seen Diana in petticoats," said I.

St. Clair sat still, smoking like Vesuvius, and un-

usually silent, both sure signs of rising mischief. I saw that he was vexed as well as amused; but I could not imagine why he was angry. He was now chewing the end of his mustache; that, too, meant a change of weather. I made up my mind that here was the reagent needed to disturb this solution of neutral elements. I was not mistaken. St. Clair, I ought to add, knew very little of Crofter, or of the vastness of the booty which was now safely invested.

"I see," said Clayborne, "that Lawton has bought Millet's 'Sheepfold.' I wanted it, but thirty thousand was more than I could compass."

Now, Lawton was another of the fellows who had thriven on corruption, and was well known by reputation to all of us. St. Clair sat up.

"Damn such people! They have no right to own honest pictures."

Crofter smiled. "Lawton was once a partner of mine," he said in an unconcerned way.

I saw Clayborne look warningly at the poet. It was of small use. St. Clair went on:

"I had heard as much, and I am sorry for you. Perhaps you know how the deuce a fellow like that settles things with his conscience. I do awful things myself, as Clayborne will tell you, but then I have abominable hours of negotiation with a certain changeless, implacable clearing-house."

"Conscience, I suppose," said Crofter, who was now too plainly set free from the finer restraints which govern social intercourse. "What the thunder is conscience?"

Vincent looked at St. Clair and then at me. It

was as much as to say: "He is off. Who can stop him?"

"That is a large question," said our host. "What is conscience?"

"It may have varieties," said Crofter.

St. Clair took no notice of this. "How can an honest gentleman comprehend a fellow like Lawton? I wonder if he ever thinks of the misery he causes. I know one good old fellow, yes, and another, hard-working artists. Both lost all their small savings by that man's rascally schemes."

St. Clair was off indeed. Three of us were struck silent for a moment. Crofter, although instantly conscious of an awkward situation, was, as always, bold and outspoken. He sat up, laid his cigar on the edge of the table, and said: "Mr. St. Clair, I don't mind plain talk, and I don't shirk. If Lawton is a bad man, so am I; but just you listen. Railroads get built where there is n't trade to run them. They go to bits. The stock don't pay, the bonds don't pay. Then a man buys the bonds and sells out the road, well, practically to himself. I want to face it square. Oh, you hold on a bit. I know. Maybe he juggles with the bonds in big lots, knocks 'em down, and then comes in. Of course there are other ways."

"And worse," said Vincent, calmly, and to my surprise. "Also there are other modes of saving a bankrupt property. I did not bring on this discussion, and I am far from desiring to annoy you, Mr. Crofter. But the case of innocent people thus ruined does appeal to me. The many suffer. One man, or a syndicate, becomes rich. It seems hard."

"It is. But where does war leave the women and children?"

"At least we pension them," said St. Clair.

I saw Crofter's face set in stern anger. "Then get all the fools pensioned. The men who kill don't pay the bill. Some other million of idiots does that. What you overnice people call conscience never made a great country. It 's men that are like glaciers do that, men that just move and move, sir, and crush whatever comes in their way."

The wine had told at last.

During this astounding statement I saw that St. Clair was becoming more and more moved. He threw away his cigar and stood up before the fire. My social chemistry seemed to me about to result in a disastrous explosion. Clayborne sat sternly silent, not liking it, but not seeing how to interfere; perhaps not caring greatly.

"You are frank," said Vincent, in his most quiet way. "If I do not answer you it is because I cannot, here. If I do not it is not because there is no answer."

"Oh, but I sha'n't mind it."

"Possibly not, but I should."

"There is an answer. The answer," said St. Clair, recklessly, as he rose to his feet, "is that there are men of business who can conduct affairs with honor and justice. The answer is that there are equitable means of restoring wrecked roads. The consequences for such hard-hearted wreckers as Lawton are the contempt and disgust of gentlemen, yes, of every honest man."

Clayborne was also standing. "St. Clair," he said, "you forget you are in my house, and that you are talking to a guest."

"Then why the devil do you insult your house with a man like that? Good night"; and he left the room in angry haste.

"I am sorry," said Clayborne, turning to Crofter.

"Oh, you need not be sorry. I brought it on myself, and I assure you, sir, I don't mind it. It 's all been in the papers dozens of times, the same kind of thing. It does n't disturb me nowadays. I threaten a little loss of advertisement, and down comes Mr. Editor. One kind of man just slavers and excuses. I am not that kind. I like the young man, too. I had a mind to have him try his hand on a bust of me."

"He will no doubt be pleased," said Vincent, with a glance of amusement at me.

Clayborne, delighted to be clear of an unpleasantness, added cautiously, "He is very busy just now."

"Well, I think I can make him see his way to find time."

Upon this Vincent rose, and with a word or two as to the address of St. Clair's studio, which Crofter had asked for, they went out to the carriage. Here Crofter turned back.

"A word with you, Mr. Clayborne," he said.

"Certainly; what is it?"

"Write me what rates you want on your coal. I shall accept them."

Clayborne was not well pleased. He was agreeably considering the delights of a long battle with this devouring octopus.

"I shall be greedy," he said.

"No, you won't. Anyhow, I shall stand by my word; I never broke it in my life."

"Very good; I will write to you."

In the carriage there was silence. At last Crofter said abruptly: "Confound that young fellow! He 's an interesting fool."

"Pardon me, he is my friend," said Vincent.

"Friend! You are lucky. I have n't a friend in the world. There are people who do what I want, and people who won't until they have to."

Vincent remained silent. Then the other added: "You and Clayborne are men of the world. Do you really think as he does, now, honestly?"

"With all my heart," said Vincent.

"Is that so? That young fellow, he is impulsive, kind of half woman; but if—well, darned if I see how you run your business. Oh, here 's the train ahead of time. That 's risky. If he was on the Z. and Q. he 'd hear news to-morrow."

The cars were nearly full, and, to Vincent's relief, they were obliged to separate.

I myself spent the night at Holmwood, and early next day I telegraphed St. Clair that he might expect to see Crofter. I did not mention his errand. The telegram lay a week on the sculptor's table with unanswered invitations and what he called "replicas" of bills. Crofter, who had been hammered into hardened indifference to the opinions of men, appeared at my house about ten the next day.

"Come to say good-by. Come over soon. I want a little advice. I gave the whole business away

last night. I knew I 'd do it. You might have heard—"

"No; Mr. Clayborne did express his regrets at—"

"Oh, I did n't mind. I forgot St. Clair's address; let me have it."

I did so, and he left with me curiosity as to a queer encounter.

It seems that he soon after appeared at St. Clair's studio, and found him at work.

"Glad to see you," he said.

"Perhaps," said St. Clair, "I may as well anticipate what I suppose you came here to say. If you have come to get an apology, Mr. Crofter, it is not on hand. If you feel insulted, I shall have much pleasure in going with you to Montana. There we can settle it in decent Western style."

"Guess my feelings ain't badly bruised."

"Indeed? I had hoped—"

"Oh, drop that. I came to see you about a bust of me. You may set your own price when you have done the job. Will you do it?"

"Where is it to go?"

"In the big rotunda of the Z. and Q. station."

"Good! I will do it if you can give me time. I shall do it in my friend Stahl's studio in New York. But I must have my own terms, and your word that it shall go where you said."

"It will; and the terms not over two thousand."

"It will be less."

"Well, not much. I don't care for cheap art. I want to say a word. I was a little set up by your friend's wine last night. I might have held my

tongue about Lawton; but that is not my way. We both talked out our side of the question. That ends it for me."

"Will next week suit you?" said St. Clair.

"Yes," and Crofter went his way.

When, later, Crofter wrote to me that St. Clair was to make a bust of his massive head, I was as much amazed as my knowledge of St. Clair ever allowed me to be.

When Vincent's wife and mine came to hear of the after-dinner scene at Holmwood, Mrs. Vincent said: "How very interesting! I wish I could have heard it."

Mrs. North considered it disgusting, but that St. Clair was right. "I suppose," she added, "that you call this a self-made man. I am glad that no one ever heard of a self-made woman. And truly, when a man ruins a lot of people and takes their bread, and retires in safety to devour widows' substance, does he really never have a pang? Why, Anne, that would kill me or you."

"Yes, dear; but we are you and I. I do not envy the children of the robbers, Alice."

"No need to; but a million is very explanatory, and I am of opinion that even an indulgent conscience can be self-bought. As to the children of these wretches, do you fancy they ever think of their parent as sinful?"

"Probably not, dear."

VIII

FOR a while we heard no more of Crofter. Time ran on and brought us to mid-winter. Miss Maywood had come to be regarded as a part of our circle. Under the tender and generally wise educational influence of Anne Vincent, she had grown less shy, but without loss of her charm of artless conversation. It said much for the spiritual beauty of her face that at last, for us at least, the less perfect framework of the body was quite forgotten.

How St. Clair made his peace with the master of Holmwood I do not know. I suspect that the big scholar said he was much obliged to him, and that St. Clair smiled sweetly, and said, "Was n't it jolly?" I know also that Clayborne took no pains to conciliate Crofter; nevertheless, Xerxes stood firmly by his word.

"And makes quite enough out of my coal," said Clayborne. "I would much rather have fought it out. Now he thinks he has obliged me. Blank him!"

This was said on one of our precious Sunday nights at Vincent's. My wife and I came early. On great occasions the room was apt to be rearranged, as I have said before, to suit Mrs. Anne's view of the fitness of things. Now, as always, there were flowers, but never

in careless excess. A few perfect roses in a Spanish vase were set on a table which was covered with a square of dark-green and gold brocade. Here they were allowed, as they opened into fullness of bloom, to let fall their petals. These were removed each morning until the last rose died. The leaves were dropped into a Persian jar. Anne Vincent had many such unusual ways, but none were stupid; and she was free from such affectations as in their very nature demand an audience. A low chair with a stool near by was set close to the fire, and by this I knew that Miss Maywood was coming. The girl was always chilly, and was sensitive as to this as well as to other peculiarities due to her delicate make. Mrs. Vincent came to the doorway with the radiant look she always had for friends.

"No, not that chair, Alice. That is Sibyl's. Let us have a little mild gossip before the rest come. Do you know that I got out of Fred only last night a really full account of that scene between Mr. St. Clair and the great Western man? I must see that animal."

"Owen told me the next night," said my wife. "He was absent the day after the dinner. He woke me up to tell me."

"I wish you would educate Fred Vincent, my dear. He is painfully, inconsiderately secretive. He is a miser of secrets. Really the evolutionary education of the husband is—well, I have given it up."

"I never tried it," said Alice.

"You mean it is useless?"

"No, no. He does not need it. As to secrets, he

cannot keep them; he forgets, and out they come. As to professional matters, he is simply dumb; and, really, he must know so many queer stories."

"Apropos of queer stories, Dr. North,"—she was apt at times, though not frequently, to call me Owen, but rarely when my wife was present,—"Fred tells me that St. Clair is actually making a bust of the Western bear. After that scene it does appear incredible."

"And yet it is true."

"Then," said my wife, "there is something about the matter that is unexplained. It is not like Victor. Let us ask him. Ah, here they are, all of them."

As she spoke, Clayborne and Sibyl came in.

"Shall it be around the fire?" said the hostess. "There, Sibyl; and here is my husband. I have said I am at home to no one else this evening."

"That is a privilege and a necessity of the higher life," said Clayborne, in his serious way. "As you go down the social ladder toward cave life, somewhere the power to exclude your fellows ceases."

"A comparative study of manners and mere social customs would be worth attempting." This was Vincent who spoke. "Even to limit it to table ways would be of interest—from a bone gnawed in a cave-corner to the evolution of one of Mrs. North's little dinners, which fill my wife with envy, and me with a sense of having eaten and said many good things."

My wife rose and made him a curtsey.

"All my earthly ambitions are fulfilled," she said.

"Fred," said Anne Vincent, "the compliment was

neat, elaborate, and has an air of preparation. I could better it."

"Then do, Madam Cynic."

Anne blew a kiss from her finger-tips to Alice.

"We know, dear," she said.

"Yes, we know," said Alice.

Now, what did they know? Clayborne regarded them as one does children. He had a pitiless disrespect for the mental powers of women, saying that they had intelligence, but not intellect. He disliked these pretty levities cast on to the tide of graver talk, and was then given to falling silent or to thundering out a brief protest. At times, as on this occasion, he fell back upon something previously said, and, using it as a text, took possession of the talk.

"You were speaking about a treatise on manners, Vincent. There are many books on manners. 'La Vie Privée,' by Alfred Franklin, is worth reading; but, above all, Furnivall's collection is admirable. You will find amusing 'The Manners of Babees: A Lytyl Reporte of how Young People should Behave.' 'The Booke of Demeanour,' too, and 'How to Eat at Table,' show how much attention our remote ancestors gave to these matters. Some of the rules are queer enough, and hardly to be quoted. By the way, North, you will find Vaughan's fifteen directions as to how to preserve health quite sensible."

I said I did not know them, and my wife said to Clayborne: "You have only given us a mere statement as to the contents of a rare book. Usually you are more liberal."

Clayborne smiled grimly.

"I will lend it to you—I mean Furnivall's book. It has some fine poetry. Here, for example, of 'neezing,' that is, sneezing:

> If thou by force doe chance to neeze,
> Then backwards turne away
> From presence of the companie
> Wherever thou art to stay;

and of yawning:

> To gape in such unseemly sort,
> With ugly gaping mouth,
> Is like an image pictured
> A blowing from the south,
> Which to avoid, etc.,

and so on."

"But what does that mean?" asked Mrs. Vincent.

"My dear lady, who knows? Ask Victor. It is of the essence of poetry to make the easy hard to understand."

We discussed this comparison in vain. Then, at last, I saw Clayborne sit up and lift his great head. I made haste to talk of some trivial matter, in dread lest he should get off to the manners of ancient Babylon. We escaped the lecture, and presently, turning away, he fell upon the books which were lying on Anne Vincent's table. He tried first a volume of Blanco White's poems. This he gave up promptly. Next he took up the "In Memoriam." He abhorred modern verse and would not look at it, but now something caught and held him. As St. Clair said, a

book which attracted him was, for Clayborne, what La Trappe was to its inmates. He became dead-dumb to the outer world. This time he was in the overmastering possession of genius. Our talk went on unheard and unheeded. It was of the evolution of the modern dinner.

"When I was a little boy," said Vincent, "the assistant bishop of one of the Southern States was staying at my father's house for the first time. I remember his asking the servant to take away his silver fork and to fetch him a real fork. He was comforted with a two-pronged iron fork, such as was then used by servants."

"I remember, Vincent," said I, "a story your father told me of this same bishop. He came upon a certain Colonel L—— leaning against a snake-fence, very drunk. He said: 'Colonel, do you never think of what will become of your soul in another world?'

"The colonel said: 'I do—often. That 's all right.'

"'What! and you constantly drunk?'

"Then said the colonel: 'Where is a man's soul, bishop, where? Is n't it in his head?'

"The bishop was a little puzzled. He said 'he supposed it was.' The admission was unfortunate. The colonel said: 'Then it 's all right. I never am drunk in the head. It is always my legs. That is what is the matter now. Soul 's all right.'"

On being appealed to as to the possibility of sectional drunkenness, I said I had known men who were always drunk in the legs, and others who, when in liquor, were more drunk on one side of the body than on the other. Presently we went back to the

question of manners and to the customs of our own young days.

"Those were simpler," said I. "We have changed, very greatly changed. I can recall seeing the account with our baker kept on wooden tallies which were laid together and notched with a file for each loaf. The baker kept one and we the other. I remember, too, how busy the house-mother was kept when preserves and pickles were home-made, and the sugar-loaves had to be split with a knife and mallet."

"I am thankful we are better off," said my wife. "One has time to read and to think."

"They, too, found time for both," said Vincent.

"And did not desire to be doctors," added Alice, slyly.

"I do not think I should like to have a woman doctor," said Sibyl.

"Why not?" I asked.

"Oh, I should never obey her—never; why, I could not say. I should have no confidence."

"What you say is due altogether," said Mrs. Vincent, "to our want of primary education. When women are early and sufficiently trained and can compete with men even in athletics, they will have the full confidence of their own sex."

"Foot-ball between two female colleges would draw," said I.

Our dear Mrs. Vincent had, in fact, a very moderate estimate of the fitness of her own sex to do certain things. When, from some theoretic altitude, she threatened to have a woman for her physician, Vincent smiled, and said: "Have her young and

handsome, Anne, and we will divide her medical cares."

Now my wife began to tell us of the great university for women to be organized on a vast scale, with schools of medicine, theology, law, navigation, and engineering.

"I have one fear," said Anne Vincent, ever prone to lapse into common sense. "Young women will go to their colleges, and live the *vie de garçon*, during four years. Some will become teachers and what not. The rest will go back untrained for domestic life, and soon become discontented with the dull routine of home duties. Is not that likely?"

"Yes," I said. "It is so likely that it happens. Women should be highly educated. That is well. But women, unlike men, have by nature a profession. At the formative time of life they are to be taught to forget it. For this alone the college gives no training. Except for those who are to support themselves, college life will be merely a perilous episode. It is craved by too many, in this day of unrest, for its independence. What college trains for the life of wife and mother?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Vincent, "wife and"—after a brief, scarce noticeable pause—"mother."

I saw the frail form of Sibyl turn. The large, tender eyes regarded Anne Vincent for a moment, and she repeated, almost in a whisper, "Wife and mother." Then, turning again, she stared at the fire; but presently, with courage I should scarce have expected, she said: "I have been through college. You are quite correct. It does unfit many for life at

home. Mr. Clayborne was good enough to dictate what I should study, and, as I have no home life, what I got only contributes to make me the more able to be—well—more contented."

"Why not teach domestic economy scientifically?" said my wife, quickly. "Why not group the girls in small households and ask them to be in turn housekeepers? It shall be done in our university for women."

"Ah," said Anne Vincent, "here is Mr. St. Clair. Good evening. We want to hear about that bust of Mr. Crofter."

"Oh, that bust; it is nearly done."

"How could you?" said my wife.

"Ask Owen," he replied, "how he could set that man on his feet and give him back health and energy to ruin more unlucky men. My crime is a small one."

"My answer would be easy," said I.

"And mine as easy," said St. Clair. "Why do men describe rascals in books?"

"But they make the rascality plain, and the man is drawn so as to be an example; and usually he has in the book an unpleasant ending. He is punished."

"Yes; that is the fault of most books," said Vincent. "Here is this man, gloriously prosperous. Who ever tells him to-day that he is a thief and should be picking oakum in a cell?"

"You did, in your way," said St. Clair.

"I?"

"Yes. He told me he guessed folks out West could speak out, but that you and I were worse. We had

some queer talks. He is n't bad through and through. I should really like to know one entire out-and-out rascal. The bust will be here next week. Come and see it. I have refused to show it to him until it is quite done. I want your opinion."

Miss Maywood, who had been watching his animated face with evident satisfaction, said: "I see that you have done him justice, the higher justice."

St. Clair nodded. "I have."

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself to serve such a man at all," said Mrs. Vincent. "What can compensate you for so degrading a task? How you men could dine with him is to me amazing. If you at least spoke your honest mind to him, Frederick Vincent, I am glad—you did not tell me." And with that she got up and touched Vincent on the shoulder, a sort of approving accolade.

It was unlike her. She was demonstrative to her friends, but very conventionally undemonstrative to the man she adored. My wife smiled at me.

"When you see my bust," cried St. Clair, "I shall have my reward."

"I should like to hang him!" said my wife, with ferocity.

"I have executed the bust," said St. Clair, laughing. "Oh, come and see it."

"And you will be paid, I presume?" said Mrs. Vincent, scornfully, as she shut up her fan with decisive abruptness.

"I will give every cent I shall make by it to those horrid orphans you feed."

"Will you? You are forgiven."

"The orphans will starve," said Miss Maywood.

"Thank you. I am glad that some one understands me," said the sculptor. "You are all—all the rest of you—pretty dull of comprehension to-night. May we smoke, Madam Vincent?"

Now and then this was allowed in her drawing-room, a rare privilege.

"Yes," she said, "because you told that man the truth; and Fred, for the same good reason; and Mr. Clayborne, because no corner of condemnation is big enough to hold him. Get the cigars, Fred. The room will be uninhabitable to-morrow."

As the men rose to light their cigars, St. Clair slipped into a chair beside Clayborne, and was thus opposite to Sibyl. He fell into such unembarrassed study of her face as few men could have been guilty of.

The talk, agreeably punctuated by need to keep the cigars alight, fell into mild ways, in which St. Clair and Sibyl took no part. The secretary sat looking at the fire. The poet scarcely took his eyes from study of her face. At last, turning, he looked with curiosity over Clayborne's broad shoulder.

"By George!" he exclaimed. "He is reading 'In Memoriam.'"

The gay chat ceased.

"Impossible!" cried Mrs. Vincent.

"Why not?" said the scholar, laying the open book on his knee.

"Why not?" cried St. Clair, overjoyed at the chance to twit the historian. "Because you have not spoken for a half-hour, and yet the book was written since 1600 A.D."

"There is stuff in it," said Clayborne, calmly. "Sibyl has been imploring me to read it. I chanced upon it just now. It is quite readable."

He was like an apologetic child. St. Clair laughed. "Quite readable!"

"My cousin is terribly particular as to what I read," said Miss Maywood. "Mr. St. Clair brought me the book a week ago, and my cousin said I might read it, but that he never had and never would. And now is n't it delightful to see him caught? She had no fear of the scholar, and looked at him tenderly as she spoke.

"My dear child," said Mrs. Vincent, "is it true you yourself have only just of late been allowed to read 'In Memoriam'? As to Mr. Clayborne, he is full charged with prejudices. Tell me, dear, not if you like it, but how you like it."

"Oh, I cannot. How can I criticize?"

"Why not?" said St. Clair, eagerly.

She answered at once: "It would be personal."

"How personal? I do not quite understand."

Usually St. Clair was sensitive to the tones, which say so much more than the words, but sometimes he lost this characteristic in the ardor of interesting talk.

She was silent a moment, and then replied quietly: "It was very long ago—but—I—lost in turn—within a year, father, mother, and brother. How can I talk of what is the very handbook of sorrow?"

"I see, dear," said my wife. "There are verses in that book I dare not read aloud. I would rather talk of something else."

"No," said Miss Maywood, seeing through this little ruse, "no; you are very good, but now I do want to say something. Mr. Tennyson speaks of a friend's death. He must have loved him well; but—it seems to me too elaborate; I cannot find the right word."

"It was written in portions, at long intervals," said Mrs. Vincent.

"And no doubt in many moods," added St. Clair.

"I did not know that. It explains a good deal. But, indeed—indeed, it wants something."

There was that in the girl's voice which made me regard her with a certain anxiety. I tried to turn the talk, saying: "Yes, it does lack unity. But it is many poems, not merely one,—that is what makes it so interesting,—and of course it is not all upon an equally high level. You know some one has said that there is no long poem. It is true. The long poems are really jewels of poetry in settings of mere verse. There must be in all long rhythmical utterances more or less of what we anatomists call connective tissue—the body stuff, the mortar which binds all parts together."

Sibyl was not in a mood to be thus lightly turned aside.

"Yes, yes," she returned; "but I did not, I could not, criticize this book as to its technical values. I said I was speaking from the personal point of view."

"Well?" I queried.

She was for some reason, or moved by some decisive impulse, eager to speak her mind.

"You will think me very silly, I fear, but I miss in this great book the sorrow which can only be for

some one of a household, some one of our own blood —a mother, a child. I do not feel in this verse the agony of loss, the death which is many deaths in one, the funeral of countless hopes, of sweet expectations, of—oh, of many things. Above all—" and as she paused I hoped that she would not go on. She drew a long breath and continued: "I miss—oh, above all else—the sorrow for another's grief, and—and the sorrow those have who, seeing their own death near upon them, grieve for those they leave, with living power to weep. I remember the sorrow I had for my mother's grief when my brother died. I miss the not unpleasing sense of the nearness of death which such loss brings to those who still live; I miss that strange grief which comes because of inability to recall the dear face. This poetry seems to me to tell of—oh, I want a word—of a far-away sorrow. It is noble and uplifting, yes, and helpful. I go with him, after him, but somehow he has not hold of my hand. There, I have had my foolish say."

I saw the great scholar's look of wonder as she went on with this burst of hurried speech. As she spoke, the tremor I had noticed disappeared from her voice. Her uplifted face was very beautiful.

"No doubt, dear, you are right," said Mrs. Vincent. "You have put the case as against Tennyson admirably well. But you expect more than he meant to give."

"I do not know," said St. Clair; "I do not know. I lost all who would have been dear before I knew what tears were. There is another great poem of

many forms of grief. It is that sarcophagus at Constantinople, 'Les Pleureuses.' We talked of it some time ago. Not the happiest can see it and fail to feel this changeless grief."

"Oh, but I should like to see it," cried Sibyl, and again her voice was the voice of unwept tears.

Mrs. Vincent was quick to note it, and rose, saying: "I have the photographs somewhere. Come, help me to look for them, my dear."

"I have them at my studio," said St. Clair. "You lent them to me last week."

I did not wonder at the glance of exasperation my good Alice cast on the thoughtless poet. Mrs. Vincent's interference came too late. Sibyl rose at her call, but suddenly burst into tears, and then laughing hysterically, cried: "Oh, excuse me. I—I am so foolish. I—" and she dropped into a chair and looked about her with large, wondering eyes.

Mrs. Vincent said, as she knelt beside her: "You look pale, dear. It is the smoke."

"I am all right now, Mrs. Vincent. It is nothing."

We, the men, were a little embarrassed, and Clayborne whispered sternly to St. Clair: "What a fool you are! Don't answer me!" And he did not.

"Ring for tea, Fred," said his wife, "and do you men go and smoke in the library. I knew the tobacco would be intolerable here."

We went like forth-driven sheep, and had our tea sent to us like naughty children.

When, thus exiled, we had settled down in the library, no word was said of Miss Maywood's emotional disaster. Vincent spoke of an interesting case of a

forged will; Clayborne discussed, rather heavily, a book on Aztec hieroglyphics; and St. Clair fluttered over the conversation like an uninterested ephemerid. At last Vincent asked the scholar why he had invited Crofter to dine.

"I asked him as I would have asked Cæsar Borgia."

"Or Mephistopheles," added St. Clair.

"Out of pure curiosity, then?" said Vincent. "What a mess we made of it!"

"We did—I did," said St. Clair. "I am glad I did. He 's a queer specimen, and for cool willingness of frank statement beats anything I have ever seen. He talked steadily at times while sitting to me, and discussed all of you as if he felt bound to enlighten me. It was fine, I assure you."

"Well, and what did he say?" asked Vincent. "The opinion of a large-brained outlaw as to his moral betters might be curious."

"He thought Clayborne a man easily to be understood."

"Oh, confound the fellow! Am I, indeed?"

No man likes to have it supposed that he is easy to see through. Why, I cannot say.

"He says he never saw a man like you, Vincent. He put it in this fashion: 'Well, that man 's the calmest cuss I ever saw.' ('Calm cuss' is good.) 'He 's a clarifyin' cuss. You can't muddle things for him, and he does think quicker and truer than any man I know. I 'll have him in my next bad case. He 's got one drawback. He is n't a man makes allowances. He 's got useless fences round him. I wonder, if he 'd been fetched up the way I was, if

he 'd have been like a little God Almighty about other folks' ways of gettin' on?'"

"Ah, perhaps not," said Vincent. "No doubt the man has qualities that are good."

"He is generous," said St. Clair. "I hear that he has been giving money freely to charities."

"No He is lavish. You remember our old proverb, 'A fool and other people's money are soon parted'?"

"I remember it well. I think it was applied to me. But this man is no fool."

"Certainly not," said Vincent. "He is merely bribing opinion that he may get social place. Now it is social legislation he is corrupting."

"Would you ever act for him?" said I to Vincent.

"How can you ask? Even if his case were righteous altogether I would not."

"He has declined," said Clayborne, "to give me the pleasure of a contest over my coal-rates."

"That is sad," said Vincent. "Ah, I hear Mrs. North, Owen. Do we dine with you, Clayborne, next week?"

"Yes; and I have asked an old gentleman, Dr. Randolph, to meet you."

"Oh, Randolph," said I. "He retired from active work years ago. I shall be most glad to meet him once more. He is full of talk about older days. Yes, Alice, I 'm coming."

IX

EFORE we dined again with Clayborne I had been to a distant Western city. My errand was to consult in a difficult case. I had been able, as it chanced, to throw much light upon it, and with reason to revive the failing hopes of the patient and his friends. I returned in high good humor, because of having honestly earned my fee, and because a comfortable railway journey is always agreeable to me. Nowhere do I think as fluently and with more sure result than in a swift train. Here I feel secure from invasion. I am guarded by the immense average of silent reserve attained by the American. If, however, I no longer crave solitary thought, and desire to talk, in the smoking-car I am reasonably sure to find those who will cordially respond. I drop into a seat near some selected man, and in ten minutes he is telling me his life-story. To converse about what a man knows best is a certain way to please the man, and to learn what he knows and what you may not. I regret that I have kept no record of the many biographies frankly given me in the long hours of travel.

This time I made a very entertaining capture. The train was only half full, and in the luxurious easy-chairs of the drawing-room smoker were not more than half a dozen men. I looked about me and chose

as the comrade of my cigar a lean man with large features. I have a prejudice in favor of large features. I asked for a match. He gave me one without a word, but made no sign of willingness to talk. Thanking him, I said: "Once in a train in Georgia a man asked me for a light. I did not offer the stump of my nearly finished cigar, but, meaning to be more civil, handed him my match-box. He returned it unused, and said: 'In my country, when you ask a man for a light, he gives you his cigar—if he is a gentleman.'"

"And he said that?" returned my neighbor, suddenly all alive. "I 'd like to hear what you said."

"I said: 'With pleasure; but first let me light another cigar. This is almost out and would have been useless.' He instantly replied: 'I beg your pardon, sir. I did n't understand'; and we fell to chatting about the great war."

After this little conversational lure my new companion accepted a cigar, and we slid into easy relations. When he mentioned his business, I saw a chance and expressed my desire to hear more of it. From this he was readily led to talk of himself, and slipped into telling me his own history. He had worked on his father's farm in New York. He had been a clerk in a village shop. He had been a book-agent, and saved a little money. This was an every-day story. An American at thirty has no idea of anchorage. He is open to do any one of a dozen things. It is not the versatility that amazes me so much as the power to apply variously a certain affluence of energy. At thirty my man concluded to go into business. He had invented, as he believed, an

important improvement on the threshing-machine. I said:

"Were you always inventive as a boy?"

"Never until I was thirty. Then I chanced to see a thresher break down, and, as I am always curious, I looked into the animal's make, and seemed to see what was needed to better the machine. Since then I have made many inventions."

This did not surprise me. I knew a similar case. These discoveries in middle life of unused capacities are apt to be made in families the children of which, as a rule, develop late. It was so of the case to which I refer.

I was reminded, by what passed through my mind, of a question once asked me by Vincent, as to how late in life a man might hope to bring into use and train hitherto little used or unused faculties. I said in reply that such efforts were rare, that few old men were thus given to novel forms of mental enterprise. I said also that such cases had occurred. In fact, the brain in those who grow old wholesomely does not seem to age as does the rest of the human body, nor to feel as distinctly as do the locomotive mechanisms the exasperating vetoes of time. As a rule, the highly cultivated brain is apt to outlast functionally that of the mere day-laborer, and yet, after all, its prosperity depends largely on the health of many distant organs. But this I felt to be too broad a question for immediate consideration, and I began anew to pay attention to the continued talk of my companion. He went on:

"I took my idea to a workman and had it made up.

Then I got a patent and asked a big firm to consider it. They offered me a fair price for it. I said: 'No. Make me a small partner, and let this machine be my capital. I have two better ones in my head.' After fussing a year they took my offer. That was ten years ago. Now I am well up in the firm. We make all kinds of agricultural machines, fruit-parers, butter-stamps, cream-separators. Now and then I still travel for the firm. I began that way. I was the man to get up the lecture-traveler and the special-accomplishment man."

"What?" said I. "Explain a little."

"Well, you get a bright young college fellow. You put him in the factory three months. Then you make him get up the science of the things we make. He fixes up a lot of illustrations and models, and goes to a village in a good, well-to-do farming country. There he sees the local editor, and advertises a free lecture or two on farm science for everybody. The lectures are interesting. If they are not, we drop him. Next week comes our sample-man and takes orders. I tell you it works."

"But the accomplishment traveler," said I.

"Oh, that 's fine! At first I traveled myself for the firm. I sold small household machines. I can sing like a bird, and I can do the church music to beat most men. So I used to get hold of the preachers and deacons of a Saturday. I always had letters from our ministers. The firm saw to that. I would sing hymns and songs to the children and the rest, and get leave to sing during the collection the Sunday after. I liked to do it, too, and don't you make

any mistake about it. I am a member of the Methodist Church. It is n't all business. Next day I went round with the machines. I know a man that travels in shovels and hoes. His plan is to lead prayer-meetings. I pick out our travelers myself. I have a list. See, now, here it is in my pocket-book. I tell you it works. 'R. Jones, card tricks, sleight of hand; Tompkins, negro songs; Walker, photographs the babies—no charge.' It works well in the West. There, too, is the church-music department."

"Selling is a peculiar talent," said I.

"Yes. Some men can sell anybody anything. I once sold a threshing-machine to a confectioner. I could sell ice in Greenland, or hot-air furnaces in Ashanti. I am going to Europe now. I want rest. I've got six weeks to see Italy, France, and England."

This is a fair statement of what a man, curious as to his fellows, may pick up in travel. I once went to Harrisburg and had to return during the night. The train was crowded. At last, in the stifling, dimly lighted smoking-car, I found a man asleep across two seats. I awakened him, and saying I was sorry to disturb him, sat down.

After a little he said, "Do you know Dr. Owen North?"

Rather astonished, I said, "Yes."

"What kind of a man is he?"

"Oh, a very good fellow."

"He is like all them high-up doctors, I guess. He gets big fees. I want to know."

"No," said I. "That is always exaggerated. Why do you ask?"

"Well, I 've had a lot of doctors, and I ain't no better, and now I have n't much money left."

Upon this my friend confided to me all his physical woes in detail. We parted before daybreak. It was too dark in the car for either of us to see plainly the face of the other.

About ten next day the man entered my consulting-room. As I should not have known him, except for a rather peculiar voice, I, too, remained unidentified. I could not resist so comic an opportunity. I said, looking at him: "Sit down. You have a pain in your back."

"That 's queer. I have."

"And you are blind in the left eye, and your digestion is very bad," and so I went on.

At last he said: "I never saw a doctor like you. It scares a man, 'most. Can you cure me?"

I said, "Yes," and wrote out my directions. It was really a simple case.

When he produced a well-worn wallet I declined to take a fee, and said: "I owe you for the seat, and the good sleep I disturbed last night."

"Thunder! I see. You were the man. But law! why did you give it away? I 'd have sent you the whole township."

I reached home from my Western trip just in time to dress and, with my wife, to catch the train to the station near Holmwood. A slight mishap to the engine delayed us, and we found the party at dinner. I dropped into a vacant chair on Miss Maywood's left. St. Clair was on her right; Mrs. Vincent in the seat next to me. Dr. Randolph, an old man, ruddy, vig-

orous, and crowned with abundant gray locks, was between Clayborne and my wife. The wine was Corton vieux, such as recalled to me my student days, when on Sundays we dined at the Café Magny.

I had not seen the good doctor for many years. The next day my wife described him neatly as "an altogether wholesome-looking man with a valuable smile." I asked what she meant, to which she answered that, like Mrs. Vincent, he never laughed, and that he had a look of antique gravity which made you feel his rare smile a kindly compliment.

The talk was quiet, and, being hungry, I said little until I caught up to the rest and felt I had sufficiently attended to my appetite. Then I spoke to Miss Maywood.

"Well," I said, "how goes the work?"

"Oh, we have finished a long article on Professor Edmundstone's book about the Northland sagas. There are only fragments of him left; but I did beg him off from Mr. Clayborne's final chastisement."

"And books? Are you still on a diet, and what? There are animal and vegetable books."

"I am reading aloud to the master Shakespeare's historical plays. He says I read well. Is n't that delightful?" Her joy at this approval was beautiful to see, as with some slight difficulty she half turned toward me and added: "He thinks Shakespeare wrote at times bits of poetry and then used them in his plays. He says that some one has remarked upon the improbability of *Hamlet*, the prince, having suffered from the proud man's contumely and especially the insolence of office."

"That is not very novel, and not up to Clayborne's usual force; but *Hamlet* might have been, in his melancholy sensitiveness, overstating, too, what such men overfeel. He who wrote was a keen observer of the world about him, and perhaps was himself a sensitive man. I think of *Hamlet* as very feminine in the ghost scene. He behaved as some women might have done."

"Ah," she said seriously, "as I did that horrid night. I was so ashamed."

"My dear Miss Sibyl, you had—you have no reason to be ashamed."

"Oh, but I have. Mr. Clayborne told me that I must have more self-control. He is dreadfully outspoken—as if I did not know. I may talk to you, may I not? You are so good to me."

"Say what you please."

"I try not to give way, but oh, Dr. North, it is hard sometimes not to give way. I love beautiful things, and the woods and the country, and I cannot even walk far. I get tired. I love children, and they tire me. I am a disabled wreck of a woman; and I must go on and on. I never talked to any one in this way. Please to excuse me. Mr. Clayborne says to bewail what cannot be bettered is to feed calamity with attention, and that I have what the healthy should envy. Have I?"

"Yes, in large measure."

"Mr. St. Clair says I have a beautiful face."

"He said that?"

"Yes. He seems to say whatever comes uppermost in his mind."

"He said what is true, but he should not have said it."

"I suppose not," she murmured sadly. "It does no good. I mean—I—"

Fortunately, at this moment Vincent asked me a question, and St. Clair said a word to Miss Maywood as to his vase.

When, being in a way troubled, I mentioned this talk to my wife, she said: "Some one must speak to St. Clair. You know that any form of personal beauty makes the man utterly regardless of everything else. It becomes worship. Then he finds a new idol, and so it goes on."

"I see we are going to have mischief, Alice. I have already talked this over with Anne Vincent, but that was a good while ago."

"The man has for some women power to fascinate. He does not know it. He does not mean to do harm. He was devoted for a month to that idiot Dorothy Summers because she has beautiful hands. At last she lost her head, and would never wear gloves. Meanwhile all the heart she has was lost, and after that hysterics. Owen North, you may smile—but it is really fascination."

"That is, dear, inexplicable attractiveness."

"Yes."

All this was after we were at home.

The table party soon followed Clayborne into the library.

"I have set out," he said, "a little side feast for my friend Randolph. Come here, doctor." We gathered around them. "Here is Raleigh's copy of 'Tasso.'

See 'W. Ralegh' writ clear across the title-page. You know how much I like books with personal associations."

"It brings Raleigh very near," said Mrs. Vincent. "It was printed in Ferrara, I see, in 1583."

"When did Raleigh write in it?" I asked. "It opens stiffly, as if unused this long while. But see how strong the binding is. Book-clothes were meant to last in those days."

"Did he leave any other mark upon it?" asked Vincent.

"No; not a line. Yet it was then common to make marginal comments. My black-letter Chaucer is full of them."

Sibyl took the little book reverently from Mrs. Vincent's hand, saying: "Was it in the Tower he read it?"

I saw the girl furtively kiss the little vellum-bound volume as she took it away to replace it on the shelf.

"Here, St. Clair," said Clayborne, "is a copy of Pope in eight volumes. It belonged to Burns. His name is in it in three places. His son, Lieutenant-Colonel Burns, gave it to an old friend of the poet. Here, too, is this gentleman's memorandum. One missing volume of the set he replaced by purchase of a full set of the same edition. One autograph is curious. Across the title-page of Volume IV. Burns has written, '*Rt. Burns, Poet.*' The same description of himself is also in another book, owned, I am told, in Chicago."

"I fancy," said St. Clair, "that nowhere else has as great a poet ventured to describe himself thus."

"Is it," said my wife, "because they doubt, or are they shy of assuming a great title, or is it because it is not the custom?"

St. Clair stood looking at the volume he held.

"The signature is slightly different from the other two."

"Perhaps it was the barley brew," said I.

"For shame!" said Clayborne. "Take it away, Sibyl. Here is Sterne's copy of 'Tristram Shandy,' with three autographs."

"I do not care for him or for his books," said Vincent.

"Oh, this is better. It is Howell's 'Letters,' with Walpole's book-plate, and later it belonged to Thackeray. I may have shown you this before."

"Delightful gossip it is! Imagine a fellow keeping copies of his own letters for publication. It was once a fashion."

"The book interested me," said I, "because in it he relates how, having a rheum, he consulted the great William Harvey. He tells where he had for drink on the Continent a fine beverage, *caughey*. He, too, had his turn in the Tower."

"I have no fancy for autographs," said Vincent, "except to put in the books the man wrote. It is pleasant to pick up Ruskin or Byron and have a letter drop out. It is like a personal welcome. By the way, Clayborne, you must have many letters of value."

"I burn them."

"Wise man," said Dr. Randolph.

"I dislike to burn even a note," said St. Clair.

"You do not even read them?"

"No. It saves a deal of bother."

"I am glad," said Randolph, "that my ancestors kept their letters. I am now reading them, and with interest, too. I am pleased to say they were all Tories."

"Like yourself," said Clayborne.

"Yes. I regret our separation from Great Britain. Our government is a sad failure, and always has been."

The doctor of the bright blue eyes and pleasant face was as complete a pessimist as I ever knew. He called himself a Quaker, and when I so describe him I mean that, although not a member of meeting, he still attended the service of orthodox Friends, and spoke coldly of Hicksites as "Separatists." He commonly used Friends' language, but always correctly. Before the Civil War he had been in close relation to Friends. When the flag was lowered at Fort Sumter he gave up his practice, went away quietly, and, although no longer a young man, became an assistant surgeon. On one occasion he was near a battery when all its officers were disabled. He took command, and, although twice wounded, brought the guns out of a position of great danger when they had come near to being taken. Upon his return on sick-leave, he was waited upon by a committee of Friends, who desired him to abandon his wicked ways. He declared that he was only one of a few hundred thousand policemen required to prevent certain people from taking Uncle Sam's property. As this did not quite satisfy Friends, and he declined to show signs

of penitence, he ceased to keep up his former connection with their body.

When the good doctor thus stated his regret at the disunion of the colonies and the mother-land, Vincent said: "It is delightful nowadays to hear a man avow himself a Tory. I like inherited opinions. I still like to call myself a Federalist."

"We are consistent," said Randolph. "My people have always been loyal, long ago to the king, and of late to their own country."

"That is prettily said," remarked my wife. "I should certainly have been a Tory."

"I should like, doctor," returned Vincent, "to argue the older question. But are you not practically inconsistent? Why try to save this miserable country, at cost, too, of time and of blood? Was it worth while?"

The doctor hesitated. Then he said: "We are here among friends. I thought, I still think, the South right; but I stood by my State, as did Robert Lee."

"I cannot understand that," said Vincent, with more than usual fervor. "Nor, pardon me, can I comprehend that fractional form of love of, shall we say country? which Owen North once labeled 'Stateriotism.' What does your State represent? What ideas? Can you describe its flag to-day? The love of a city I can comprehend, and that of a country, but the other I cannot. As to being still a colony, as to that being desirable, good heavens! no colony ever comes to anything, in letters, arms, or invention. It has no individuality as a nation. Look at Canada,

older than we. What has she to show? Colonies have no adult life. They are overgrown children. They are simply imitative, and imitation implies weakness."

"And what have we?" said Randolph. "We are only a vast human average."

"If so, our average must be high enough to compete with the best of other lands, no matter if it be in war, diplomacy, invention, or product of influential ideas."

"And I," said Randolph, "should like to argue that with thee; but one cannot get up a debating society in Clayborne's house. I inherit my ideas, I fear."

"No one inherits ideas," said Clayborne. "You inherit a peculiar form of mental and moral structure which makes easy of assimilation ideas sown in the soil of childhood."

"'T is a consoling doctrine," said St. Clair; "a dreadful thing to have to wrestle with your ancestors. But, really, the world is very illogical. When I get in debt, Clayborne ought to select one of my grandfathers and keep a little account against him, chalked up on his tombstone, instead of abusing me."

"But what would be the use?" said Sibyl.

The serious aspect of any statement was that which usually addressed itself to this young woman. Mrs. Vincent looked at her with suppressed amusement, and then, as she caught my eye, with a glance of swift-following sadness. It is one of the charms of close friendship that we acquire sensitive apprehensiveness as to the unspoken thought of friends. Now

both of us were asking ourselves who was responsible in the past for all the sorrow of this crippled frame.

"Ah," exclaimed Sibyl, "if we could punish the past!"

St. Clair, who was in one of his wild moods, cried out: "We can't even do that for ourselves, our own past. We ought to have life reversed at eighty and live it backward to extinction. Oh, then we should catch it! We should say, as we youthed to some age of former indiscretion, 'Now I have you, my little man. All my troubles began when you first stole apples. What an example for my later years!' Whack! Whack! Then one would ask, not how old are you, but how young are you."

We laughed, except Sibyl, who was half puzzled, and Clayborne, who disliked this sort of harmless nonsense. For a moment he sat still, saying, "'Youthed—youthed'—St. Clair is past hope." Then he quoted: "'See that thou art master of thyself. In the day of consequences thou shalt not revile thy father, since he, too, may have suffered for the sins of his father; and of all who are Allah is the Father, and what at last shalt thou say of him?'"

"I think," said St. Clair, "I should say that if the child be the father of the man, he occasionally fails of parental obligations, and that if Allah be the Father of us all, I, at least, am of opinion—"

"Please not," said my wife, touching his arm with her fan. "What has become of Dr. Randolph's Tory ancestors?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Vincent, "I am sure we were about to hear something of unusual interest."

"I cheerfully accept my corner," said St. Clair. "What is it, doctor?"

"Let me explain," said Clayborne. "Pray sit down, all of you. Take a cigar, St. Clair, and keep quiet."

"I am still considering your quotation. I am digesting the vague," said the poet.

"Suicidal cannibal!" cried Vincent, laughing. "Go on, Dr. Randolph."

"But first a word," said Clayborne. "Last week my neighbor read me parts of his maternal grandmother's diary. It seemed to me well worth your hearing. I asked him to read it to you to-night. Now, then, Randolph."

"Thou must understand, Friend Clayborne," said the doctor, "that it will seem disconnected. That I cannot help. I have marked the portions which deal with her personal life. The rest is receipts, memoranda of public events, of deaths, births, and the like. She was, when young, a good girl of emotional nature. She was born and brought up in a family of Friends of the best type, who lived plainly and accumulated wealth. She had been early taught the valuable lesson of self-discipline and absolute obedience. This discipline she readily assimilated, having been, I presume, a person unusually dependent for her ideas and beliefs upon those with whom she lived. Here is her miniature, painted when she was over thirty. She was still a beauty. In later years the possession of wealth made her, as is common, more decisive."

"The face," said Mrs. Vincent, "is still one of gentle submissiveness. It has a look of tender

appeal, as if she felt the need of protection, of guidance."

While the picture went from hand to hand Randolph read aloud: "'My mother tells me to keep a diary, that I may learn to write better, and to acquire what she calls "a good style." I do not know precisely what that is. I must try. I am eighteen, and this is the first day of Tenth month, 1777. My mother says to begin with an account of our family. My grandfather came over in the *Welcome*. He was the third son of Jn. Austin. The Austins live in Thistleways Hall. This is in Monmouthshire. Cyril Austin is my father. He is a Friend, and that is the only religion I know about. There are others. I have wanted to see Christ Church and the Meeting-house of the Swedes. This I may not.' Here follows in a different hand, 'This is ill wrote, my child.' Then she continues: 'My mother writes this, but I can do no better. My father grieves for that the laws are broke and the king ill used. . . . My sampler is done.' Next comes a receipt for pickling of walnuts, and so it runs on. A year later it grows interesting. 'Was much moved First day by the words of Hosea Morgan concerning lightness of talk. Made good resolves. Yesterday I was in the sitting-room darning socks with mother. The maid said a young man was without on business. When he was fetched in he said his name was Trent. He had been to see my father to buy certain goods for the supplying of his slaves in Maryland. He was not like our young men, for only the most serious are let come to see us, that is, me. I must not write that this young man was pleasant

to see. He was dressed very fine with silver buckles. I will set down what he said, because I am led to record things strange to me. He called mother "madam," and kept looking at me; but this is the world's way, I suppose. I must get used to it. He said, "Madam, Mr. Austin refuses to take the Congress money. When I was plainly distressed because I have little other, he was very kind, but said to take it was against his conscience. If I were to go around to Second Street to his house and see you, madam, there might a way be opened. I thanked him; and now, whether that mysterious way open or not, I am well rewarded for my faith." Then my mother said, "Thou art pleasant to say so, but we are plain people, and I do not fully understand thy words. How art thou rewarded?" At this he bowed, and said, "I have had the happiness to see what I have heard of, a Quaker beauty"; and then this young man bowed to me. I did think my mother was not much displeased, but, ah! that I should be told such a thing to my face. My mother said, "Thy manners, young man, are forward. Leave the room, Cyrilla. This is a matter of business." "How singular!" he said. "My own name is Cyril. Cyrilla!" Now, the way he said "Cyrilla" had a kind of sweet lingering, as if he meant to say it long. I think he liked it. I had to go. I did not want to go. The rest my mother told me, and it was what often took place. She said, "Friend Trent, when people are distressed as thou must be, we have this way to help such as are in real need. I will take thy continental money and give thee for it the king's gold. The dis-

count we must lose. Thy poor slaves shall not suffer." "Madam," he said, "it is true. I am sore pressed to provide in these evil days when men have no loyalty. I hoped to have been paid certain debts. Men are no longer honest. I do frankly accept. I shall be able to repay it at some future day." Thus he got his money and went, and my father's conscience was set at ease. I would I could know what is done with the money of Congress; for to buy with it is the same as to take it. Perhaps my father hath one way to see it, and my mother another. I dare not ask.

"'On this the first of Second month, Fifth day, '78, I met the young man near to the State-house on Fifth Street. He took off his hat, and might he escort me home? I was so confused I could not speak. It seemed that he was come on tobacco business. A ship being to sail from Annapolis, he desired my father to share in the venture, and would himself go out to France, as was to be supposed, but truly to England.

"'Second month, twentieth; Sixth day. Friend Trent comes often to eat dinner and to sup, and by chance we have met elsewhere. Oh, it must be wrong!

"'Fourth month, twelfth; Third day. I knew it must come. I am unhappy. Cyril Trent hath asked me of my father, and he will not hear to it. The young man is of the Church of Rome. I may not even see him again. But I did, this Fourth day, and he asked me to go with him and be married, if my father will have it or not. I cannot. It would be wicked. But I love him.'

"After this we hear no more of Cyril," said Ran-

dolph. "I gather that he went to England, as did many good loyalists, and no wonder. He is never named again, until ten years later she writes: 'I shall never see Cyril Trent in this life. I must think of it as a dream that can never be real. I do hear that he hath gone to India.'

"During these years we learn that her father and mother die, and that her brother and she divide a great estate. There are large gaps in her diary. We find her, at last, a sad woman in England with the Austins, who are glad to see the rich colonial cousin. These people are, as she first says, papists, and later Romish; then at last she speaks of them as Catholics. She has found a heart home in that church. But of the lost lover there is no word. And now, when she is thirty-two, she goes back to settle her affairs and see her brother. This is 1791. Here I find written simply: 'I go home, whither business affairs call. I dared not set down long ago that when Cyril Trent went away he did tell my father that he should never change (my mother used to look over my diary), but now I am more free to write. My father answered: "It is thus young men speak. Time will change thee,[1] and thou wilt come to see that I am right. Thou art of Rome; we are of Friends. Hadst thou been of us, none were more to my mind." Then I, being in the back room, heard Cyril say, "I may write?" and heard my father answer, "To me, if there be occasion"; for he had declined Mr. Trent's venture, which proved an ill one. A privateer took the *Nancy*. After a year, my mother, seeing me

[1] "I do fear that he was right" (1791).

pine, told me Mr. Trent had never wrote, and this was when my father's partner, Jasper Morewood, had leave to ask me in marriage, which he did many times. I never liked him. I fear now I may lack courage to tell my brother of my late return to the church of our fathers, nor will he be pleased with my dress. These things are to be endured with patience. A month after I first came to England I asked of some if Cyril were alive. None knew. Is he yet alive? He could not have cared for me. Sometimes he is out of my mind for months, and then, as Mr. Goldsmith did say to my cousin of a lady, "he comes unasked and takes a seat in the best room of my heart, and stays as he pleases. For," said Mr. Goldsmith, "some thoughts seem to step in thus from the outside without so much as the ceremony of knocking." I thought it pretty. I wonder does he yet live. Thrice did I write to Cyril; but if my father saw my letters and took them out of the letter-bag, I know not. He had a right. Or if they ever reached Cyril, he did not reply. I must have been in despair to do such a thing. I should have wrote my brother I had become a Catholic.'

"Of the brother we have no word. She settled herself in a home, and found people hostile to her and her creed, as was common in those days. A year later she writes: 'Ninth month, tenth; Third day' (still using Quaker forms). 'I have had a great shock. I was in Wilmington on First day. As we have no church there, I walked in the forenoon. God willed that I stayed to one side to let go by the Friends who were coming forth from meeting.

Among the last was Cyril. Although in the plain dress of Friends, I knew him, and he me. He said, "Cyrilla!" and I could but gasp, "Cyril!" I can write no more.'

"A week later: 'Cyril has had many disastrous fortunes. At last, being poor, he took to the sea, and, rising, became mate of a ship plying to Bristol in England. There falling ill, the owner, a Friend, took him to his house, where, abiding long in great weakness, he was moved by their kindness, and perhaps because of weakened mind, to consider the cause of so much goodness. Finding it in their religion, he became a Friend.' Again she says: 'And now he is become what I was, and I am what he was. In a play I saw in London, the unhappy lover saith: "If I could be thou, and thou I, this thing would be otherwise considered." He is I, or, I might say, being a Quaker, he is as I was. But then it was my father who did object, and not I. Mr. Addison once said to my cousin: "The heart hath no creed. 'T is a pagan and adores idols, but its litany is ever the same."'

"A month later she writes: 'Second day. I saw that Cyril, being poor, is yet too rich in pride to ask me again. Now I know that he wrote often for two years and had no reply from any, not even my mother. I am sure my father had no hand in this matter. He was of an open life and mind. It has come to pass that I, who am rich, must consider his pride.' She does not say how she considered it. We may guess.

"Soon after I find: 'We were married in St. Peter's Church, on Pine Street. The priest of my own church

would not unite us, and the meeting hath renounced Cyril. Mr. Addison had reason.'

"There is more of it, with distinct evidence of a happy life, and the record of the birth of my mother, Cyrilla Trent.

"I found in St. Peter's list of vestry the name of Cyril Trent in 1794. In 1798 both died of yellow fever, and lie buried in St. Peter's ground, on the side near to Pine Street."

"Then," said my wife, "both compromised on the church—our church."

"Yes."

"They were people of easy religious virtue," said St. Clair, "like me. I envy them the experience of three forms of belief."

"Naughty boy!" said Mrs. Vincent. "But who stole the letters?"

"Ah, there comes an interesting question," said Randolph. "I forgot to tell thee that, in mentioning them, she says: 'I blush to think who may have read my lost letters and his, too.'"

"She may be blushing now at the thought of our talk," said Sibyl, "if—if people blush in that other world."

"But, at least, we know she was happy," said my wife. "She had the good fortune not to outlive the man she loved. What of the letters?"

"I have them here."

This greatly excited the women.

"Oh, let us see them!"

"That you shall decide. My father succeeded Cyrilla's brother in their India trade. On his death

I had to dispose of a huge mass of business papers. These I burned, or most of them. I found a small red-leather trunk labeled 'Jasper Morewood.' It was locked. Let me add that this man was lost at sea in 1789. He left no heirs, and was found to be in debt. I broke open the trunk. In it I found, lying open, the much-amended draft of a letter to Cyril Trent. It seemed to have been meant to be a letter from Cyrilla to her lover, giving him up, and hinting cleverly of another engagement. If Morewood used it to forge a completer letter in her handwriting I do not know. She does not speak of the matter. In any case, it is strange that he kept the draft."

"Ah," said Vincent, "wiser folks have done this. There are—I have seen them—drafts of most dangerous letters, written during the Revolution or later. At the foot of some of them the writer copies the caution on the letter sent, '*Burn this.*'"

"That is hard to comprehend," said Clayborne. "I have seen the letters of which Vincent speaks, and very queer they are. But go on, Randolph."

"I found, too, in the same box, three letters in Mr. Trent's hand to Mr. Austin, and four to Cyrilla. The three letters of Cyrilla to Trent were separately tied up with faded ribbon. The letters to Mr. Austin had been opened. Those I left at home. The seven others are here—four to Cyrilla, three from her to her lover."

"Oh, do let us see them!" said my wife.

"A moment; they are sealed, all seven."

"Oh," exclaimed Sibyl, "he never read them! How strange!"

"No; he had not opened one of them. I mean that Morewood had not opened them. Those addressed to Mr. Austin he seems to have opened and read."

"Ah," said Vincent, "that is still stranger. What stops certain men on the ways of crime has always interested me. He could steal letters, perhaps forge letters, but why not have read these others?"

I sat still, puzzling myself over this human problem.

"Men are variously made," said my wife. "What do you think, Sibyl?"

"I think," she said, meaning her reply for my wife alone—"I think—is n't it possible that Morewood so cared for Cyrilla that he feared the hurt of reading what Cyril or she might have said to each other?"

I did not catch all of my wife's answer, but did hear her say, "The letters to Cyrilla's father were opened, so Dr. Randolph said."

"Yes; that was different," said Sibyl.

"A queer business!" exclaimed St. Clair. "Let us hear them, doctor. Read them."

"I have never done so," said the doctor. "The seals are still unbroken. Here they are."

As he spoke, he laid on the table seven letters. They were yellow with age, a century old. Trent's arms were on three, stamped in faded red wax.

"Oh," exclaimed Anne Vincent, "see, Fred, the grains of sand still on the addresses of the letters from Cyrilla!"

The unopened letters invited comment.

"Shall we open and read them?" said Randolph.

"No," said Vincent; "certainly not."

"Shall we read and not open them?" said St. Clair. "I can tell what they wrote."

"Nonsense!" cried Clayborne.

"Then let us vote," said St. Clair. He asked each in turn, "Shall we open them?"

"I am neutral," said Clayborne. "It is quite immaterial."

All the rest said "No," until he came to Miss Maywood.

"Burn them," she said.

"Burn them! But I want to see them," said St. Clair.

"No, no. Cyrilla is waiting; she is blushing," said Sibyl. "Please to burn them. I feel as if I were she."

"Thou art right," said Randolph. "Do with them as thou wilt, Friend Sibyl."

Sibyl gathered the letters from the table, and rising with her usual difficulty, amid entire silence, cast them one by one into the fire. Then she stood watching them as they burned. Something in her attitude troubled my wife, who said, "What is it, dear?"

"Nothing, only they moved like live things. Cyrilla must have been uneasy. Now she thanks us." With this Miss Maywood turned, and stood as if in thought. It was an impressive little scene, and we were still silent. Then she looked at St. Clair, who was the first to stir, and added, "You should not have wanted to see the letters."

"But I did."

"Yes, that is a pity—a pity."

She moved toward him as she spoke, emphasizing her words with a deprecatory movement of uplifted hands. And always, I may add, she used her arms with distinctive grace. As she passed Mrs. Vincent, she leaned over and whispered.

"Yes, dear," returned the woman addressed. "You were; we all are—all women should be. These men would have opened them. Are you going to leave us?"

"Yes, I am tired. I must go. I am sleeping here to-night."

As she passed St. Clair, he said: "I can write Cyrilla's letters if you want them."

"I do not," said Sibyl, with decision. She steadied herself by touching the table, and, as we stood up, said, "Good night; good night, every one." She was a little flushed and very delicately beautiful, as she lingered, smiling, with large trustful eyes like those of childhood.

After this we thanked the pessimistic doctor, and soon went away. As we sat in the train, Vincent said: "Men who think all things bad never act up to their beliefs. The logical outcome of true pessimism would be suicide. This man fought well, is a good citizen, an untiring helper of his fellow-men."

"Did you see Miss Maywood," said I, "when she swayed as she left us? Clayborne gave her his arm. She said so pleasantly, 'There is always help.' She has the instinctive trust of a seeking tendril."

"Yes, yes," said my wife; and we lapsed into silence.

When this young woman next saw my wife, she said: "Do you think Mr. St. Clair could write a letter of love to be like those we burned?"

"Probably. He would do it well."

"I cannot imagine it. Nothing seems to me so remote as—"

"As what, my dear?"

"As—well, I was thinking—but here is Mary."

X

ON Wednesday Clayborne came to tell me that we must take Sibyl and himself for a week, because of plumbers in his house. We were all well pleased, and none more than Alice, for on this Saturday there was to be a woman's convention in favor of female suffrage. Delegates were expected from States as remote as Florida and Montana, and many subjects of interest were to be discussed besides the main question. My wife was always attracted by such reformatory movements as were to end in fulfilling the prophet's words: "The Lord hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man." When it came to putting in practice certain of these reforms, she soon began to see so many difficulties that her brief enthusiasm by degrees faded away. To the ludicrous aspect of some of the changes advocated she was, perhaps, even too sensitive. Her friend Anne Vincent once said: "My dear, I hope I shall never present myself to you as laughable. A jest to you is what the sternest logic is to Mr. Clayborne." This was certainly clever, but hardly true, and was only half meant. Indeed, a good deal of Mrs. Vincent's brilliant talk at times needed the gentle exegesis of friendly disbelief.

This especial Saturday was to be devoted to the Anti-Dress League—a title from which modesty seemed to

me to demand explanatory comment. My wife explained that it was meant to advocate economy in dress. When I said to Anne Vincent that I presumed she would be the chairman, she replied coldly that she herself was going out of pure curiosity; that as to economy in dress among women, it was like disarmament among the nations: who would begin? Then my wife explained that she meant to oppose the whole movement as being, in the event of success, cruel to working-women. I did observe that, as an emphatic example of their views, both ladies were equipped for this occasion in a manner to excite the envy of the economic many.

No reporters of either sex were to be present, which, perhaps, was as well, for I heard that it was finally considered wise to apply this money-saving measure at first to the garments which are unseen.

There was to be some kind of feast in the evening, and I was therefore left free to ask our usual party of men to dine. To these I added Randolph and Haro, an old army comrade. When I told Clayborne, he said:

"Of course that means endless, futile war talk."

As I could not deny it, I advised him to dine alone and to attend a lecture by one of the Western lady professors. My wife had hesitated between the dress-reform dinner and this lecture. I was amused when Clayborne took me gravely, and I had to look for the program. "It is," I said, "on 'The Tertiary Man.'" Then I did say that my wife, unlearned in geology, had observed that up to this time she had been content to consider him as Secondary.

This was lost on Clayborne. He did not even stay to examine it logically, but merely said:

"By the way, Haro knows about that confounded road and your abominable friend. I shall stay and dine here."

"Well, you are warned; expect a camp-fire gossip."

We dined merrily, discussing the woman movement and less serious matters. When we came to my father's old Madeira, we fell upon the war, as Clayborne had predicted. It came about in this wise: John Haro was a well-built man, with a red head, now well mixed with gray. He was a railroad president, and a person of most efficient character. Courageous, ready-witted, and resolute, he had an enviable war record, and came out of the struggle a brigadier, declining a higher brevet rank. As is common among us, he was plain Mr. John Haro on his card, and was rarely called by the title won on the battle-fields of Virginia. I was one of the few who still called him general, and yet not many men in the world had seen more battles. When I spoke of his disregard of a well-won title, Randolph remarked that he, too, had almost forgotten that Haro had ever had such a label.

Vincent observed that at the North, after the great war, by popular consent, nobody under the rank of major was addressed by his army title. He went on to say that many men of much higher rank, like Haro, never used their old titles.

Clayborne added that it was all true, especially of the Northern States, and that although we were supposed in England to be fond of titles, we certainly did

not cling to them as retired officers of all grades do in England, even men who have seen no more martial service than that of an escort.

From titles the talk fell upon names and surnames. Vincent quoted Addenda and Octopia as names which, although used in fiction, were real appellations. Haro said the drollest he knew of were given by an Irish tutor who called his twins Gem and Mini. This, oddly enough, had to be explained to Clayborne, who admitted, as I never heard him do before, that he was mind-blind to certain forms of the comic. St. Clair, laughing, declared that he should be forgiven if he could match Haro's illustration. Clayborne replied promptly that the name of a once famous bishop of London was, he thought, as remarkable. This man, he said, was a poet, and wrote on Death. He advised St. Clair to read it. Here Clayborne forgot the promised name, and began to lecture on the limited jurisdiction of the episcopate of London, which did not cover the Temple Church or the Abbey. We were used to this, and when we got him back to the starting-point he told us that the bishop was called Belly Porteus. His parents were Virginians, but if he were born in that colony Clayborne did not know. We voted the name matchless, and wondered at the parental courage, and whence it came.

Then Vincent, whose range of reading was wide and often unusual, said quietly:

"May not you be mistaken in this name?"

St. Clair said once that when Vincent was sure he was apt to be perilously gentle.

Clayborne replied: "I quote from Walsh's 'English

Poets,' that amazing collection of forgotten poetasters."

"It is a misprint," said Vincent. "It should be 'Beilby.'"

"Good heavens!" ejaculated the scholar; but whether he exclaimed surprise at an inaccuracy or at the oddness of the blunder I never learned.

Randolph then asked why certain names seemed vulgar or were considered common.

"Question of usage," said I, "if you mean Christian names; but much might be said of this matter. Let us ask Clayborne to report on it." They agreed to this, laughing, while Clayborne retired into the hermitage of his own mind to turn over all the accumulations of memory on the subject we set before him.

Meanwhile Haro said: "There is a pretty story about names which Mrs. North's mother told me.

"Lord E—— was calling on Mrs. K——, and chanced to remark that the names on the signs in England showed how much of the good blood of the old families had been scattered everywhere, but that here he saw only common names on the signs. This aroused the indignation of Mrs. K——'s daughter, a girl of fifteen. 'But,' she said, 'they do have homely—oh, really vulgar names in England. I saw in the Peerage—'

"Mrs. K—— exclaimed in her sternest voice, 'My dear!'

"His Lordship, somewhat curious, and desirous to be further informed, said, 'Pray, my child, let us hear.'

"Upon this, the young lady, in no wise dismayed,

went on: 'In the Peerage I saw the name—oh, there are others as queer—the name of Lady Cecilia Buggins. Now, is n't that a vulgar name?'

"His Lordship said, 'Oh, quite remarkable'; and Mrs. K—— promptly turned the talk into more pleasant ways, while the culprit was silenced by a frown which might have been a survival of the mother's memories of *Lady Macbeth*. When his Lordship had gone Mrs. K—— said: 'Well, my dear, you have covered yourself with glory. Lady Cecilia Buggins is his Lordship's aunt.'

"'Then I am glad,' said the young woman."

"Charmingly told, Haro," said Vincent; and, as we made laughing comments, Clayborne, returning to our world again, said to Haro: "Your own name interests me. It is the Norman war-cry, 'Haro, haro!'"

The general returned, smiling: "Yes, if it has not a baser agricultural origin. I suppose some loud-voiced ancestor may have howled 'Haro' louder than the rest, and got it for a name."

"It was heard in battle later," said I, "when our fellows hesitated at the Bloody Angle in the Wilderness, and a friend of mine called out, 'Come, boys!' Your men cried out, 'Haro, Haro!' and they rushed it. My friend Francis told me he heard it."

"It is true," said Haro, flushing a little at a splendid memory.

"A little Smoke," I said, pushing toward him the wine we call "Smoke Madeira," because of its singular smoke-like bouquet.

"A great wine," said Vincent, "and a fine story.

Were not you caught after Antietam? Tell us about it, Haro. I have heard it only at second-hand."

"Certainly, if you would like."

I saw Clayborne light a cigar and fall back in his chair, resigned to his fate.

Haro, who well knew our friend's peculiar ways, said: "I shall make it mercifully brief.

"After McClellan allowed Lee to get away over the Potomac, I was for a few days in charge of the intelligence department. We got no trustworthy news. Jackson had shot two of our spies, which rather discouraged the rest. At last I saw the general, and said I had resolved to go over and see what was going on. He said this was not my business, and I, that it was. I was then only a lieutenant-colonel. I persisted, and at last I was told to do as seemed best to me.

"Now, I am a bit of a naturalist, and hunt bugs and other vermin. I had then two pet rattlers which I kept in a stout wicker basket. I had taken out their fangs and poison-glands, wishing to see if then they would lose immunity to their own venom. My staff was never quite satisfied with my precautions. One day I laid down on this basket a lighted cigar. An aide came in for orders. I said, 'Sit down.' He did, on the cigar. As he felt the fire, the snakes began to rattle. The aide cried out, 'Great heavens, I am bitten!' and fled to seek a surgeon. He was so laughed at that he left the staff. That 's incidental. I got a linsey-woolsey outfit, two vials of beetles, and my little basket of snakes. A Methodist clergyman, who wanted to go South, went with me. We got

over the Potomac far up the river, and slipped through the pickets after some adventures. I shook off my preacher, and was a lost naturalist caught in the army net. Fact is, I lived two days with the doctor of the Fourth Georgia, who was in the same line. I was talking bugs with the doctor in front of his tent, when an old major of regulars stopped. 'You look mighty much like that fellow Haro who was a plebe at West Point when I was in command.' This unfortunate reminiscence was addressed to me.

"My doctor said, nonsense; I was Professor Cyrus Burton of Williams College, and I was trying to get away North. My doctor assured him that he had been promised a pass for me. The major insisted that I should go with the doctor next day and clear things up with the provost marshal. I said I would go with the major at once. This bluff answered, especially as he was rather in a hurry and had some outpost duty. The doctor said for form's sake he would go with me in person next day to get my pass, but that I was all right.

"I had no least desire to visit that provost marshal. I got away late that night to an old mill on the Potomac; but as it was then near dawn, it was too bright to risk the riverside guard and a swim. I hid all day. No one was about. Next night at dusk I got ready to leave, but just then I saw a score of men with intrenching-tools coming to occupy my mill. I was lost. I went up-stairs, and on the way let out my snakes on the first landing. This was to give me time. I ran up to the loft. The rattlers saved me. My snakes held the fort for five minutes in a truly

loyal fashion. They fortunately had no convictions as to their being bankrupt in poison and harmless. Accordingly, they rattled furiously on the dark stairway and struck at every one who came near. There was a tremendous row before my gallant outpost was destroyed. They saved my neck. I got the time to look hastily about me. I saw hanging up a dirty United States cavalry jacket and a battered undress cap. I put on both, and stuffed my wide-awake felt hat and my coat into a flour-barrel.

"Well, they caught me, bugs and all, and I was tried as a spy. Luckily, I was miles away from my doctor. Two fellows swore they had been at West Point with me. I went out of the bug line, said I was Lieutenant Peter Starling, Company B, Fourth Pennsylvania, of the Third Corps, and was in uniform. This bluff bothered them. One man said I was not Haro. I saw him years afterward. He said he was sorry. I never liked to ask why.

"Then I had a great bit of good luck. The major was too inquisitive on the skirmish-line, and got a ball through his shoulder, which lessened his interest in the outside world. If I knew who shot him he would have a fat place on my road. They could prove nothing. I was sent to Libby Prison. There I licked a lieutenant of Connecticut volunteers because he insisted I was Haro. I had tried in vain to make him hold his tongue. The preacher who crossed with me was finally sent back into our lines, and put himself and me in the paper, names and all. Tom Alston, my chief of staff, wired that journal that I was ill at home with pneumonia, and the sermon he wrote that

preacher contained many promises and was calculated to insure silence.

"After a month I was one of a lot that dug themselves out. I was pretty near to going back. I was hid in a log hut near Charlestown, West Virginia, with some nice Quaker people. Three soldiers came into the yard. I gave up. Well, a girl's kiss saved me. She swore—or said—I was Cousin Joe, and was kissing me in a very worldly fashion as they entered. It 's a pretty addition, but you have had enough. That girl's husband and brother are on my road, but to this day she gets red when I drop in at Cross-roads station. A long story. I had to tell it in blocks. I saw that major last week. He said I had had a narrow escape. I hate walking. I must have walked three hundred miles."

"That reminds me," said Randolph, "of the colonel I saw at Avoca in North Carolina. It was last year. He declined to walk a few miles to our yacht, and said he never walked; had had enough to last him all his life. I asked him when that was. 'Oh, in the war; walked three hundred miles with that blank villain Sherman after me. No more walking for me; have a horse hitched every morning to the paling-fence. Throw your leg over him, and there you are. Why should a gentleman walk?' I told this to General Sherman, to his great amusement."

"Your escape, Haro," said I, "recalls to me Harry Wilson's. There was a smart little fight on the Kanawha. The Rebels caught Wilson and his orderly. Harry was a very clever young surgeon, and as the Rebs had no surgeon, and we had supplied them well

with wounded, he did his best for them. Next day they sent him across country to see General S——, who was in command. This officer had a Minié ball through his ankle. Wilson said the leg must be amputated. There was no chloroform or ether. The tourniquet was put on, and the leg taken off. Then Wilson stopped. 'Before I tie these arteries,' he said, 'I must make a bargain. You are to send me over our lines.'

"The general said he would not do it.

"Wilson said, 'Then I shall leave you to die of the bleeding.'

"The general said he would have him shot.

"Harry said that a bullet was to be preferred to Andersonville.

"The general said Wilson was a something or other scoundrel, and Harry, that now he must both apologize and let him go free.

"The situation was critical; the general yielded. Harry stayed a week looking after the damaged Rebs, and was duly sent into our lines. The general promised that if ever he caught him again he would make it unpleasant."

"Ethically considered," said Vincent, "that is a valuable story. Was your man justified, Owen? I think not."

Randolph agreed with Vincent. I was in no least doubt that he was wrong.

Haro said grimly: "I have been in Libby. I decline to vote."

Clayborne said that he had no business to help any of them. But this most kindly old scholar was

savage only in talk or with the pen. We rated him soundly. He was one of the first to send help to Charleston after the war.

"By the way," said I, "Wilson told me that when the general was hit he sat down and cried like a child."

"One of the effects of shock," remarked Randolph. "Colonel A—— was hit in the arm at Gettysburg, just as his regiment was going into the fight. He was about to mount, and when the ball smashed his wrist he ran along the line, calling out, 'Run, run; the Rebs are on us.'"

"Cerebral shock," said I.

"Yes; he was of faultless courage," continued Randolph. "In a minute he was again clear of head. He found the ambulance people, had the arm amputated, and, returning, commanded his regiment through the rest of the fight."

"Did he not suffer afterward?" asked Vincent.

"Yes," said Randolph; "it was past the endurance of mortal nerves. I think I reported the case."

Clayborne had become interested. He inquired: "Was that the man who later was wounded at Fort Fisher, and for a day was thought to be dead?"

"No; but we have had enough of doctors and wounds. Pass the wine, Fred."

"But was that man really thought to be dead?" asked Clayborne.

"Yes; he was an officer of distinction, and was carefully examined. He revived just in time to escape being embalmed."

"Cheerful that," said Vincent.

"And would you mind my telling you a story?" asked Clayborne. "It may interest you doctors."

Said St. Clair, who had taken but a small share in the talk: "I was about to speak of what I have seen in India."

"My own tale is of the East," said Clayborne.

"I resign in your favor."

"Then I wish to begin by saying that I heard it from two witnesses—my cousin Tom Church and an old sea-dog, Captain Barr, at that time a mate."

"Pardon me, Clayborne," said Vincent; "if, as I presume, your story is of resuscitation after apparent death, I had once in a suit for damages to consider the literature of this question. The evidence in Dr. Cheyne's famous case is, or would be, considered of dubious value to-day. I am sure that the Indian cases are frauds. But go on, Clayborne."

"Well, my cousin—a doctor—and the mate went ashore to shoot ducks near Whampoa in China. This was in 1818. As they were going back to their boat, a big Chinaman claimed pay for his tame ducks, which he swore they had shot. There was an angry altercation. The Chinaman used rather too strong Pidgin-English, and the mate knocked him down. My cousin and the mate fled amid a hail of stones from a mob of Chinese, and went on board the ship, which had, as I remember, the odd name of *Garnacliffe*. This was at dawn. Before noon came a mandarin. He said the man was dead. They must pay twelve hundred dollars or go ashore for trial. Both offers were declined. Barr said, 'We want to see the dead man.' At evening came a funeral of sampans, a kind

of boat. There were mourners in yellow, and in advance a sampan with the corpse, a mandarin, and a retinue of other boats. At first they talked over the ship's side. Then my cousin was invited to come down and inspect the departed one. Barr said yes, but first they must secure the boat. This was agreed to. The Chinamen had a good case. The hoisting-tackle was without suspicion fastened to the two hooks at the bow and the stern of the sampan.

"Then my cousin and the mate went down the ship's side. The man was dead. A mirror failed to show the moisture of breath. He was tickled, burned with a cigar, and otherwise ingeniously dealt with. No one spoke, and the dismayed men at last went back to the deck of their ship to consult. My cousin said, 'That is certainly the man, Barr, and he is dead.'

"'But who killed him? I surely did not.'

"Barr gave an order. At once the men on the ship began to haul, and the sampan rose out of the water. There was a howl from the mourners. Barr cried out that they meant to keep him until he was high, and explained in crude Pidgin-English what he meant by 'high.' 'If he goes the way of honest corpses we will pay. Haul, my lads!' Upon this arose the corpse, plunged overboard, and swam in a lively fashion to the nearest boat. This is a true story. My cousin told it to me, and years after Barr repeated it without important variations."

"Rather startling," said Vincent.

"What is startling?" said my wife, standing in the doorway. "Come to the drawing-room, and have tea,

and be thankful, Owen, that I did not bring home some economic ladies. I am quite cured of economy in dress."

"Had you ever the disease?" cried Vincent, and we went up to tea laughing.

"Do you believe that story?" said Randolph, as we followed Clayborne.

"I do. I know a stranger one," said Vincent. "No; not now. It is long. It gave a name to an old house not far from here—a house dear to some of us for many memories of gracious hospitality. Another time. Remind me."

"I certainly shall," said Randolph. "You mean Champlost, of course."

XI

A WEEK or two later in the year we promised to go to the studio. St. Clair had been at work on a pedestal for Keats's vase, and desired us also to see the bust of Xerxes Crofter.

It was about 4 P.M. when we entered. Vincent was too busy to come early. We found Clayborne seated in a corner, deep in a book on Greek vases. Sibyl Maywood was in a chair in front of the vase, and to her St. Clair was reading with passionate emphasis the poem of Keats.

He paused as we came in, and greeting us, said: "I was just saying to Miss Maywood that in English there are but two, perhaps three, poems which deal with their subjects as this does. It makes throughout an unusual claim on the receptive imagination, and failing of this interpretive aid must seem pure nonsense. There are elsewhere lines, passages, verses, which ask the same form of unreserved mental sympathy, but here the need runs through the whole poem. There is in it the undying springtime of joy and love. I never liked the last two lines. They lack relation to the rest of it. Truth may be, in a sense, beautiful; it is not beauty; and is beauty truth? I wish he had lived to alter the lines. I am self-assured he would have done so."

"How joyously extravagant it is!" said Mrs. Vincent. "I have no heart to quarrel with it. The other poem is, of course, Shelley's fantasy of the skylark; and the third?"

"No one has seen," said St. Clair, laughing. "Look at my pedestal."

It was of white, or rather of rose-gray, marble, square, and about two feet and a half high. Above was a wreath of grapes and leaves carried around all four sides. Below were lilies. In front he had set a noble relief of the dead face of Keats, and had given it a look such as I had never seen in a marble face.

"What is it gives that tenderness to the closed eyes?" I asked.

"Look; go nearer," he replied. "I have ventured to indicate by chisel touches on the lower lids the sweep of his eyelashes. I shall be told it is not good art. I don't care an etcetera. You like it?"

"Oh, yes, yes," said my wife. "Where have I seen that before? Oh, now I remember. It is on the tomb figure of Guidarello Guidarelli at Ravenna."

"Yes, that beautiful thing. I have succeeded, have I not? Now look at the two sides. At the back I have put a broken hour-glass."

On one of the two sides was a Greek youth in relief, and on the other side a girl's face. Seeing it, we looked at one another, but made no remark. It was Sibyl. I do not think she recognized herself; indeed, I am sure she did not, a fact which surprised me.

My wife moved around to the front of the pedestal,

and said: "Anne, the face of Keats has a look of 'lifelong struggle merged in peace'—rest, if you like. I see a line beneath it. What is it? Ah, that is prettily used," and she read:

> "When old age shall this generation waste,
> Thou shalt remain."

St. Clair suddenly threw a sheet over vase and pedestal, and turning away, said: "Here is my Xerxes. I have done him justice." He cast the cover off the marble and stood aside.

He had done him stern justice. All the features were strangely exaggerated. It was a brute, hard, inflexible, rapacious, and capable—a terrible likeness.

"The deuce!" exclaimed Vincent, coming up behind us, having just come in.

"Yes, he is the devil. I hope he will like it. All the man is there. I have taken vengeance for many. But, by George! it is Xerxes."

"Will he like it?" said I.

"Who cares? I would bet he will like it."

"He will not," said Mrs. Vincent. "It is justice without charity."

"He will like it," said Vincent. "What do you say, Sibyl?"

"Say? It is horrible. I cannot look at it any more. It is wicked, wicked," and she walked away.

"A very good likeness," said Clayborne; "rather too strongly—well—accentuated."

The artist had given the eyes a slight slant downward and inward. It was that which gave the look of Mephistophelian intelligence.

"Yet it is not a caricature," said St. Clair.

"No," said I. "There is here only an intensifying of all the worst expressions which belong to the man's face, as men must have seen it at different times. It excites no laughter in one who looks at it."

"But should a caricature always do that?" said my wife.

"Certainly not," replied St. Clair.

"Yours would be a dangerous art if you always used it to bring out on the face subtle confessions of all that is bad in the man," said I.

"Why not all that is good?" said Mrs. Vincent. "Your bust is uncharitable. You do not let us see that this man has, as Mr. Clayborne says, the virtue of fidelity to his pledges. He is not a liar. He is not avaricious. He has courage. He keeps his word."

"That," laughed St. Clair, "must amazingly add to the difficulties of a career like his."

"Let us drop him," said Vincent. "He has been too long in decent society. Let me see the vase."

St. Clair said: "No; not to-day. You will find tea in the drawing-room."

Why he was unwilling I do not know. Vincent did not urge him.

As we went out, Mrs. Vincent detained him.

"Why," she asked, "did you put Sibyl's face on the pedestal and your own?"

"Oh, because her face has, like the girl's face on the vase, a history of joy which can never mature or be more than it is. And then, it is beautiful, and I wanted to do it."

"Do you always do what you want to do, Victor?"

"Generally."

"Without thought of consequences, Victor?"

When she called him Victor he knew, as he said, that he was vanquished.

"You sometimes make friendship difficult," he said.

"In order," she replied bravely, "to keep it from becoming impossible."

"What am I to do?"

"I do not know." She was vexed, annoyed, void of counsel. But she said, in her just anger: "It was a great liberty, and you put it there because she, too, is never to realize maturity of joy. Incredibly brutal, I call it."

"*Vae victis!*" he groaned. "I will smash the whole thing. *Habet*"; and he followed the indignant woman, who sat down to her tea in silent wrath.

XII

HEN St. Clair saw any beautiful thing it produced an effect which seemed to leave him for a time in a mood of simple adoration. This often showed in strong emotion. Great music moved him to tears. As regards nature, I am sure that he was free from affectation. A flare of crimson possessing the sky to the zenith is to me beautiful, and something indefinably more. When he said to me that it was terrible, I know that he meant what he said. All novel forms of beauty in women or in men caused, as I have said, uncomplicated, childlike admiration. It had at times awkward results, for no woman was ever yet able to accept the possibility of a man's admiration not going deeper than the limit set for beauty by the proverb. St. Clair, when in one of these moods, was soon willing to supply all manner of excuses for what he called creating the "prosperity of opportunity." In plain terms, he would pay his art idol enough attention to give the desired occasions for study of face or form. After this, at some uncertain date, came by degrees the analytic condition of mind, when faults were seen and the causes of grace or beauty more and more coldly and critically considered.

I once saw him much disturbed in the presence of

Lawton, the botanist, who was pulling a magnolia-flower to pieces as he studied it, pistil and stamen. The artist could not be made to see the analogy when reproached with his own analytic studies of the natural history of the beautiful in human beings.

He was just now filled with admiration of the face and hands of Sibyl Maywood. It is probable that the crippled body may have contributed by its sad contrast to the charm of a face which, we long afterward agreed, could not be fitly described. That it was of rare beauty was plain. That it was classic in form was obvious. But it had also spiritual expression, such as comes to the simple-hearted or high-minded from the death of some one greatly loved, but never from mere temporal trial or disaster. On this, too, we were at one. Had the expression I mean been capable of definite description, it would not have had the quality which gave a delicate unearthliness to all the silent language of her changeful features.

The winter went on, and, as several of us were busy, we met more rarely. Vincent was here and there trying cases. Mrs. Vincent was occupied with her many charities. My wife was struggling in the interests of the newly endowed university for women. She wished it to consist of a group of cottage homes where, besides the higher studies, there should be taught the art and the science of the one natural profession for which no college trains young women. She was having bad luck, and was seriously troubled by the possible loss of a noble opportunity. St. Clair was in one of his prolonged moods, which we had

learned to forgive. He might be in the city, and yet never see us for a month, and then make up for it by bothering the busy with daily visits. Both Clayborne and I were writing books, and the scholar was twice absent on business in the West.

Mrs. North still tenderly cared for Sibyl, and now and then, when Clayborne was long absent, asked her to visit us for a week or more. Our daughter, who was now in her fifth year, had for Sibyl one of those passionate attachments seen at times in little girls for their elders. As usual, it was imitative. "I am Sibyl," she said one day, and began, to her mother's horror, to walk with an excellent simulation of the gait of Miss Maywood. When told not to do so, she said: "But I can't help it, mama. I am Sibyl." As for Miss Maywood, she loved the little one, related stories, and taught her songs in a clear, true voice of great sweetness and no great volume. It was a pretty love-affair, useful to the child, valuable to Sibyl.

One day, early in May, Mrs. Vincent asked me to call, as she desired to talk to me of Sibyl, who was then at Holmwood for a week during Clayborne's absence.

"Where have you been?" she asked. "I see Alice, but you men are invisible."

"Mr. Clayborne is off again. He is building a few miles of rail to connect his lines with another main line. Xerxes declares this to be against their agreement. Clayborne says he made no such agreement, and is joyous over the chance of a lawsuit. Vincent is equally happy in the likelihood of having a shot at Xerxes."

"Really, you men are a quarrelsome folk. But I want to talk about Sibyl. Do you know that Victor St. Clair, whom I never see, goes almost daily to visit her? He takes her flowers, he reads to her. You know, Owen, it is the old story. The only time I have seen him of late he raved about her beauty. He says she is like that broken marble head in Rome, in the museum of the Baths of Diocletian, is n't it? The one we agreed to call the 'Sleeping Vestal.'"

"Yes, I recall it," said I. "He is right."

"Oh, that man, Owen! He has left her face on the pedestal, although he promised he would not. This girl is susceptible to passion; she is sensitive to all forms of beauty; and we know how fatal this man's ways and looks have been. She was meant to love and to be loved. Ah, Owen! How will it end? She is utterly unconventional. In a little while St. Clair will drop her as he has done others. The analytic stage will come, of which we have talked so often, and after that— Ah, it is sad, sad! Some one must talk to him. I said so months ago. You thought me hasty."

"Will you do it now, Mrs. Vincent?"

"I must. I must, I suppose. Fred sees it. He is greatly concerned. Bring the man to me. I have written to ask him to call. He made no answer. He has probably forgotten. Why do we all care for him? Why does Clayborne spoil him, and leave that girl alone? Really, friends add terribly to the responsibilities of life."

I drove at once to St. Clair's house. I found him

lying on the lounge, gazing at Sibyl's profile. He had already begun to justify Mrs. Vincent's prediction.

"It is not as interesting as I thought," he said, as I entered. "The drop from the brow down the nose is not quite Greek. I altered it in the rilievo. The mouth is a trifle too large. It is too expressive. You may have noticed that. I saw it only last week. I am to take a mold of her hand. That is matchless. People do not observe hands. Clark told me last week that he had just painted three children for one of our freshly millioned men. One, a boy, had a beautiful right hand; his left was that of a peasant. But this boy was left-handed and expert with tools."

"That is curious," said I. "Did you get a note from Mrs. Vincent?"

"Yes, but I forgot—oh, here it is." It was unopened.

"Do you value that woman's friendship? You are near to the loss of it."

"I? What! I would give her or Vincent my life at need."

"Then give her an hour of it and make your peace. The people who would give a million and do not give a penny are not made for friendship. We do not want the million. We often want the penny."

"Damn your financial parables! I will go now; no—I will go to-night."

I made him dress and go with me at once. Pretending an engagement, I left him with the vexed woman. What passed I heard next day.

"Say? What did I say, Owen North? I said, 'Victor, you have neither heart nor conscience.'"

"That was a promising beginning. What next?"

"I said: 'You go to see Sibyl daily, even when Clayborne is absent. You take her flowers. You read to her. You take her books. And you do it all merely to look at her. It is cruel. You could do no more if you meant to marry her.'

"'Good heavens, marry her! I am not fit to open a door for her.'

"'Do not dare to defend yourself.'

"'But I do not—'

"'Then do it. You are past endurance. Have you begun to see faults in her face?'

"St. Clair flushed. 'A girl in her condition, with that tormented frame, must know that for her love, marriage, is impossible. I have only made her life happier,' he said. 'I have not the vanity to presume —to dare to believe—'

"'Victor, you have no right to exasperate me by adding fiction to folly. I have seen these little tragedies before. Usually I did not care for the victim. This time it is different. If Sibyl Maywood's body is crippled, her heart is not. It does not reason—'

"'I wish you would not talk about her as crippled. It is a horrible word.'

"'Nonsense. You will drop her of a sudden, and hurt us—through her. You are incapable of a quiet friendship for this dear child whom God has seen fit to afflict. You will only make life for her sadly difficult. I do not see why we all care for a man whose art makes him so selfish.'

"'Nor I,' said St. Clair. 'I'll be hanged if I see. What can I do?'

"'It is humiliating to a woman to have to say these things. Make some excuse. Go away. God grant it may not be too late. Go somewhere. To any other man I should say, stay and amend your ways. You are good at excuses. Find one.'

"'But I have engagements. I have—'

"'I never before knew them to stand in your way.'

"'I am sorry. I will go. But it does seem a little absurd. I really do not want to go now.'

"'Victor, if you wish me ever to speak to you again, you will go at once. Let me add, dear friend, that Fred entirely agrees with me.'

"'Oh, hang Fred! I can stand the women.'"

He was like a child. He took his story to my wife, and what she said I do not know. It troubled him. As he went out, he met my little maid. She looked at him, and said: "Mr. Victor, have you been vewy naughty to-day?"

"Yes," said the poet. "Bad with a big B and a big D before it!"

"Oh, my!" said Mary. "What do they do to you when you are bad?"

"They whip me with whips no one can see."

"They would n't hurt," said the maid.

Early next day I found St. Clair gaily singing as he packed his trunk.

"You will have your will," he said. "I am going. And, confound it, do these women think I am going to kneel down and confess? I had far rather go. O Lord! they know, do they? They think they know

everything. *N'importe.* Don't tell, but you should have seen Anne Vincent's *mise en scène* for my trial. The room was twilight dark, and the dear lady was in some amazing black lace, and not a rose anywhere. Unluckily, Mrs. Leigh came, but the set was not for her. She sat down on the open piano. I was so sorry that woman could not swear. She went soon. I know her disaster contributed ferocity to the dismal after-scene."

"You do not seem much the worse for it," I said.

"No, perhaps not." He became grave. "My dear Owen, you have sometimes misunderstood me. It is really possible—no, I decline to explain, even to you. But try not to think too ill of me. While I am away, write me now and then, and do not be such an ass as to think it needful never to speak of Miss Maywood. You will want to know my plans. It is May. I am going to ride through the Virginia mountains. I do not know where else I may go. I think of going to live in Paris. I am never bad there. 'Not bad,' you say? 'Only thoughtless.' Yes, it requires a good deal of intelligence to be good. Do get these notes answered for me." There were a dozen or more. "I did not show you this. I have had it a month."

It was a telegram: "Bust first-rate. Make another for my house. Check by mail, $2000. If not enough, wire. XERXES CROFTER."

"And you answered?"

"Yes. I wrote a copy of my reply on the back of this telegram. 'Can't do two busts. Busy. Consider pleasure of making bust sufficient pay. Can't accept money which is not your own. ST. CLAIR.'"

"And he? What did he say?"

"Here is his answer: 'Guess it was worth while to bust me. Don't understand what you mean about money. Check sent. CROFTER.' Then I wired: 'Check returned. ST. CLAIR.' I wrote 'Plunder' across the face of his check, and mailed it to Xerxes."

"Give me these telegrams. I want to show them to Vincent."

So far I had expressed no opinion. St. Clair was in a sensitive mood, dissatisfied with himself, vexed, and with as yet no more real conscience about the trouble his esthetic madness made than was provided for him unasked by the less eccentric morality of his friends. What mischief there was to be made out of the matter of this bust was already made. It was now useless to scold him. He returned to his packing business, while I stood re-reading these astonishing telegrams.

Presently St. Clair looked up. "Why the deuce don't you say something, Owen? I seem to please no one just now, not even myself."

Thus challenged, I said: "Neither Vincent nor I will agree with you. You should not have replied as you have done. You should not have made that bust what you did. It was unfair. It was not the way to punish him."

"Confound it, Owen! It was the only way."

"Then no way were the better way. And there is no more to say. Xerxes is learning many things, some good and some bad. A little charity might—"

"I can't run a Sunday-school for brigands. Hang the fellow!"

"Yes, with pleasure. But, truly, it is not easy to deal fairly with a man like this, who is cultivating for the first time the decencies of life. Something between kicks and kisses seems to me the thing. I have obliged him, I have set him on his feet again, and I feel—"

"Yes, by George! Dr. Frankenstein, you are welcome to the man you have remade. You are responsible for whatever beastly things he may do."

"And for all your sins, dear old boy, since I pulled you out of that typhoid scrape years ago."

"Quite true. It has kept me easy in mind ever since. But, oh, here is the end of our correspondence. I did not finish. Here is his reply: 'My old doctor used to say, "Foolitis is an incurable disease." You have it badly. I have the bust. CROFTER.'"

"You come out pretty even."

"No; he has not yet seen the fun of it. He sent the bust to the New York spring exhibition. Here is what the 'Tribunal' says of it. Take it with you. Perhaps Mrs. Vincent will forgive me when she reads it."

I ran over the article as he resumed his task.

"There is one bust, 'X. C.,' by Victor St. Clair, which is a strange and powerful work. It is No. 30. If the man is like it, we are sorry for him. It should be labeled, 'The Scapegoat.' Probably it will turn out to be a class-leader or a Sunday-school superintendent. The face looks as if it carried all the sins

of the people. It is questionable whether an artist has a right to set out on a man's features all his worst attributes. A suit for defamation of character should be in order."

"You will hear from Xerxes yet, Victor, or you may never hear. He is said to have a good memory and to be unforgiving. No one can say what he will do. I fancy him more likely to avenge material injuries, but, like Clayborne, he sometimes finds joy in battle, and fancies a trial of sharpened wits. I think him by nature good-humored."

"Well, so far I am the boy on top. Good-by."

"Ah, one thing more, Victor. Have you done anything about that bas-relief? You took a great liberty, and when you put your own face on the other side you did a worse thing."

"I altered my phiz on the vase and on the pedestal. I will not touch the other—never, never! Great heavens, it is beautiful! I shall keep the pedestal, and that is all I will do."

I felt that enough had been said. "Write me a line, Victor. Don't quite forget us. You have a mighty talent for neglect."

I went away thinking of the two men for whom I was so hopelessly responsible. Then came to my mind certain other cases of people whom I had made well, and who for years came to me at intervals for help. I recall one hapless and grotesque little hunchback, who was paralyzed. I asked a despairing surgeon to let me try my hand on his case. The lad, who was about fifteen, got well. Then he came to me and calmly told me I ought to help him. "If you

had let me die I would n't have been a trouble to nobody. You oughter of let me died."

I started him as a shoeblack. He sold out in a fortnight at a loss. I set him up in a market-stall for fruit. He did no business, and lived on his own apples. Next we put capital into a peanut-stand. As to this bankruptcy I am less clear. On each financial defeat he assured me that I was to blame for keeping a helpless cripple alive. In despair, I found for him a home as doorkeeper in an asylum for incurables. He reproached me for thus classing a person willing to work, and was meekly indignant.

One day, somewhat later, I met Haro and Clayborne in Vincent's office, and chanced to mention my sad experience, apropos of a friend who was credited with unusual intelligence, but who somehow failed in all his undertakings.

It amused Haro, and we fell into talk about the causes of failure in the conduct of life. It was interesting to note the variety of reasons given for unsuccess by these successful men.

Vincent said: "Of course one presumes the man, like our friend, to have mental competence. Granting that, lack of persistent energy is the common cause of failure in my profession, and also the lesser qualities are often fatally wanting, such as good manners, tact, patience."

"In my own profession," I said, "these lesser characteristics occasionally assist men to win who are really inferior to some who, for want of this group of minor social qualities, miss the place they would otherwise attain."

Clayborne said briefly: "I think I should have succeeded in any line of life to which I had given myself, but one must give one's self."

"As a soldier?" I asked.

"No. I lack power of quick decision. I take it that in war a rare few are intellectually stimulated by peril, and thus, in time of danger, see with instinctive clearness, every sense, every power, being quickened by the need of the moment. It is like the periods of inspiration which at times come to poets, or are said to."

Haro, who was an example of this capacity for swift decisiveness, smiled, and the talk passed into a discussion of the varieties of courage or want of it seen in war.

XIII

ST. CLAIR was gone seven weeks. He had the grace to write Miss Maywood that he had an errand in the South. When he came back he was at his best. "Was he forgiven?" he asked Mrs. Vincent. He had seen a woman in West Virginia; such a figure! But art was perilous among the mountain people. He had commented upon her figure to her husband, and been promptly asked what the blank was it his business. Mrs. Vincent said she was glad, and hoped the experience would prove of permanent value.

As it was now near to summer, we were all of us about to flit in different directions, and we were to dine with Clayborne before we separated. On our way to Holmwood, in the train, Mrs. Vincent said to me: "Sibyl is not looking well. I have arranged with Mr. Clayborne that she is to go with Fred and me. He has no idea that one can overuse a human machine. The girl is tired. I think I told you or Alice that we have taken a cottage on the bay at Bar Harbor. It is a pleasant wilderness. Few people go there. The anchorage for the yacht is good. You must come and see us, you and Alice and the maidie. Alice says yes. St. Clair is behaving himself beautifully."

"Yes; his present love-affair is our little Mary. That, at least, can do no harm."

"I wish I thought the other matter had done none. Sibyl is changed. She is less simple. I came upon her in my drawing-room yesterday looking at St. Clair's photograph. She put it down hastily and took up another."

"It may be," said I, "that our knowledge and our fears come too late. She is not strong. She has a weak, insufficient heart. But then time is a great doctor."

"Yes, soon or late he cures all human ills," she returned sadly.

At the back of Clayborne's house he had built out an ample semicircular addition to the wide veranda.

"Come," he said; "we dine out of doors."

We followed him, and found the table set on this porch. It was covered with roses. At this time of the year and at this hour we needed no artificial light. Beyond the garden the view was limited by a thin wood fringe which hid the stone-walled space I have already described. The round table brought us close together, and all were gayer than common, pleasingly excited by the novelty of dining out of doors. Moreover, we had this day a vintage champagne past praise.

Sibyl was in unusual spirits, in one of her childlike moods of what seemed to me at times too excessive gaiety. The talk was certainly well fitted to arouse mirth, and she clapped her hands joyously as she listened.

St. Clair was telling of that verbal duel with Xerxes,

of which Vincent and I, at least, were already informed. She laughed at the narration, but said no word of approval to St. Clair. A moment later, turning to me, she discussed quietly the ethics of the matter. She thought the artist had not been fair.

"I am curious about your foe," said my wife to St. Clair. "Tell us more about him. Does he talk much?"

"Sometimes steadily all through a sitting. Sometimes he did not speak for an hour."

"Have you ever known an excessive talker who rose to great eminence?" asked Vincent of me.

"There have been such, but they were never administrative people, nor in the professions do I recall one. Of course we mean the men who have the malady of talk."

"Your strong men," said Clayborne, "are at times steady talkers, and then, like this man, silent. The morbidly silent are to me the most remarkable; Defoe's silence, for example, when for twenty-eight years he did not speak to his wife because, as he said, 'she provoked him, which urged him to make rash replies.'"

"Imagine," I said, "the exasperation of this silence. No wonder his wife went distracted. One daughter stayed with him, and, why I know not, talked to Defoe by signs. Twenty-eight years two months and nineteen days was the term of his silence, and, as his last biographer mentions, was exactly the time of Crusoe's life of silence. There must have been in Defoe's mind some queer relation between the two cases."

"Shall we call this eccentricity or insanity? As I recall it, the return of willing speech," said Clayborne, "was at the end of an illness."

"I knew," said I, "of an insane man, once an army officer. For forty years he never spoke. Then accident brought him into the company of an old general who had been his second in a duel. The insane man at once began to talk to him, but never again broke silence. But what of Xerxes? I have personally found him an amusing companion."

"Yes, he tells a story well," said St. Clair. "There was one worth repeating. The man was born and raised in Arkansas in its worst days. His father kept a small grocery and general 'notion' shop. Xerxes has still the belief that slavery is a good institution. You should hear him. 'Sir, I would propose to extend it to about one third of the white people I know, and all the niggers, of course. This slave business cost my father a lot of trouble. Our judge was Walter Wampum. He came from Virginia; Indian blood, Pocahontas, and all that.' Let me explain," said St. Clair, "that to do justice to Xerxes's Western tongue is past my skill. He gets off guard when he tells a story. I shall let him speak. 'Well, our judge was mighty set up about his family. To be fit for anything a man 's got to be set up about something. The judge he had a lot of boys, and, as he was right well off, he kep' a tooter to learn them things. When Bill Wampum got old enough to be allowed a bowie-knife there was n't a tooter would remain. At last they got a Massachusetts Yankee named Joe Chalkley. He was a long-legged, watery sort of a poultice of a man.

He had yeller hair and wabbled around town with his hands in his pockets. Everybody bossed that man. He liked boys best, and went about with them like a youngster. You might have noticed, Mr. Saint Clair, that meek men are sometimes rash. Well, this Chalkley he had some eccentric notions about slavery. If you chanced to get onto the institootion with this man, he 'd get red in the face and say things like any other man might.

"'One day he told my father that black people were just as good as white; he reckoned they 'd all be one color when they got to heaven, or some was white here would be black there. This was so rank unreasonable that my father lost patience, and says he, "You keep clear of me. The next time you come foolin' round here with your abolition rot, I 'll perforate you." I guess father did n't mean it, but Chalkley he went straight away to the judge's. When the judge come in he found the tooter pilin' his clothes in a trunk and jumpin' on 'em to get it shut.

"'Says the judge, "What 's up?"

"'Says Chalkley, "Crofter, the groceryman, he says he 's goin' to kill me on sight because I said black men 'd be white in heaven."

"'"Great Scott!" says the judge. "You 've got a low opinion of your Maker. He 'll shoot sure."

"'Says Chalkley, "I 'm goin' to leave."

"'Says the judge, "Mr. Chalkley, whether you live or die is n't of much moment; but, sir, in this business the honor of my family is concerned—you understand, sir, the honor of the Wampum family."

"'Chalkley he felt weak, and down he sat on his

trunk and looked at the judge. The judge he says, "You take this six-shooter, and you walk down-town, and when you see Crofter you shoot. I do advise you not to miss."

"'Says the tooter, "It 's awful, judge. I don't know one end of the machine from the other."

"'Says the judge, "I regret, sir, your neglected education, but, sir, the honor of my family, sir, makes that of small consideration; and, sir, either I must shoot you, and then kill Crofter, or you, sir, must attend to this matter in person. I prefer the latter course."

"'Well, down-town goes the tooter, and after him the judge to keep him on the path of dooty. There was dad swappin' brooms for chickens and turkeys with an old woman. I was sittin' on a crate whittlin'. Chalkley he out with his pistol and shut his eyes and fired. Down went dad all in a heap. Bang goes the tooter again, and there was a dead turkey, and Mrs. Booker hoppin' round on one leg, with her thumb in her mouth, clean blowed off. Dad was n't badly hurt, but he had to feed standin' up for a fortnight. Chalkley was for shootin' him deader, but the judge says, "Quit that, you fool. Can't you see the honor of the Wampum family 's been sufficiently attended to? And, Crofter, you 'd better go out of the business of threatenin' members of my family. Now, Mr. Chalkley, what stage do you take? West or East?"

"'Well, sir,' said Xerxes, 'that man stayed on, and just before the war he was ordered to leave by a vigilance committee, because the widows and orphans

were multiplyin' under that man's hands to such an extent that the town finances could n't stand it.'"

Every one laughed except Miss Maywood.

"A good story," said I. "Do you think Xerxes invented it?"

"Invent it? No; he has no more imagination than a clam. I am sure it is true. He said that the way Chalkley took to shooting was instructive concerning what came later.

"It seems Xerxes went to the North soon after this event, and, I fancy, concluded that as shooting was a matter of education, and at the North the number available for this purpose was larger than at the South, it was well to remain, as he said, with the biggest crowd. At all events, he became a commissary clerk and prospered."

"I must see that man," said Mrs. Vincent. "Do ask him to dinner, Fred."

"Cheerfully, my dear. You will permit me to dine at the club that day."

"And," said I, "did he never show any annoyance as to the extraordinary verdict you pronounced on him that night at Holmwood?"

"Not a sign," said St. Clair. "I think he considered me a kind of art-engine, and not a subject for hostile remembrance. He may have changed his mind."

"Yes; he will remember," said Vincent. "The debt is doubled. He will collect it as surely as Shylock, and it will be from near your heart, Victor."

"I hope you will be careful," said Sibyl, simply.

"What nonsense, child!" exclaimed Mrs. Vincent.

By this time the dusk of the late June twilight was upon us. Candles with tall, old-fashioned glass shades were placed on the table with the fruit. While we discussed where the Keats vase should be set, the shadows deepened under the stars. The dim light, which is not star-given, but seems as if it were the return of radiance stored by day in the sunlit earth, lent to all things the tenderness of indistinct outlines. Fireflies flashed here and there. A gentle hint of silence was in the air. The talk fell away, and for a little while no one spoke. Then, of a sudden, St. Clair pushed back his seat and began to sing. It was his way, and surprised none of us.

"Come through the roses, dear;
Thy gentle kin are they.
The lilies share thy fear
Because the month is May.

"Come through the shadows, come;
The twilight hour is still.
The voice of toil is dumb,
On meadow, lake, and hill."

At the second verse, to my surprise, Sibyl's voice joined in. She must have known the song. She must before this have sung it with St. Clair. The two voices rose pure and sweet in the evening quiet. Mrs. Vincent touched my arm with her fan. I understood. As they ceased, Sibyl said: "We must sing, now, 'The Holy Hour.' It is better than your song. Sing it; I want it now, at once."

She spoke with the eagerness of a child. I was

struck of a sudden with the intimacy implied in her manner to St. Clair. It had in it a gentle assurance of trust, of some easy right to the imperative mood. Sibyl was still very natural. She was not yet at the point of self-confession as to her feeling for St. Clair. It might never come.

"He who wrote 'The Holy Hour,'" said St. Clair, "can write a song. Few can. The art is lost. I set it, but Miss Maywood thinks my music might be bettered."

Then again he began to sing, but Sibyl was silent.

"This hour to thee! When as the sun
His course in the high heaven hath run,
And dew upon the earth doth fall,
And clouds their infant light recall,
May I in heart and spirit be
An hour with thee!

"This hour be thine! As tender sweet
As to the heart returning feet
That timely come, and hands that bless,
And eyes that add their own caress,
So tender and so timely be
This hour to me.

"This hour to thee! And if I weep,
Let hope her watches o'er me keep,
And build a rainbow from my tears
That 'neath this sullen cloud of years
Shall promise brightly I may be
More than an earthly hour with thee."

"Thank you," said my wife.

We had, as it were, a shock when Clayborne, rising,

said: "We have had enough, I think. Did it take him long to write it, St. Clair, or did you do it?"

"I did not. I cannot. I wish I could. My heavens, it is so simple, so tender!"

"Stuff! stuff!" exclaimed the scholar. "Come into the garden and have your tobacco. Pick up those cushions, St. Clair."

Meanwhile Sibyl had disappeared into the house. We followed Clayborne through the roses into the garden beyond, where, in the pallid light, the worn Greek capitals and the sacrificial altar were gray blurs in the evening shade. We sat down at the far side on the marble bench. Vincent stretched himself out on a cushion at our feet, while St. Clair walked to and fro. As we talked of our summer schemes, I chanced to observe that St. Clair was standing still at the end of the long garden walk. His pipe was out. He was leaning on the altar. A firefly flashed beside him, and I noticed that he was looking at the sky. Again half a dozen of these winged lanterns lighted up his face. He was very quiet. At this moment I saw Sibyl at the upper entrance, a white figure moving with accustomed slowness down the garden walk. She paused, came on, paused again, and, I supposed, would turn into the cross-walk which led to our seat. When I saw that she did not, but went on toward St. Clair, I rose and stepped across a bed of flowers so as to meet her. I felt some vague uneasiness.

"Sibyl," I said.

She made no reply.

"Sibyl!"

She still moved on. I was struck with the fact that she appeared not to notice me, and that she did not, as usual, halt in her gait. She moved slowly, but seemed free from awkwardness of motion. Again I spoke, and louder. As she still did not seem to hear me, I took her arm, and said, "This way, Sibyl." We were now near to St. Clair.

She said softly, "Where am I?" and then very low, but in a voice of ecstasy, "My love, I am coming, coming," and instantly became rigid from head to foot. I caught her falling form.

I cried: "Don't be alarmed. She has fainted."

It was really a hysterical attack. Clayborne was troubled. St. Clair, who had heard her, was far more plainly disturbed. She was carried to the house and put to bed. My wife and I remained all night. Before morning the girl was clear in mind, but very weak, and quite unable to recall this unpleasant little drama.

"Something happened at dinner," she said. "Did we sing? I went indoors, I think—I forget. Did I faint? Mr. Clayborne was cross."

"People do faint," I said. "No; no one is to blame for fainting. You have been working too hard."

"It must be that, I suppose," she said wearily.

Clayborne was worried, and could not see how work could hurt any one. The women were wiser. My wife, who hears everything she ought not to hear, said to me: "Hysterics! Yes, and something else. Owen, I have learned to love this girl, and she is so frail and so tender. She gives out her love as a

flower gives its odor, asking no return. Was it St. Clair's fault? Anne Vincent will not talk of it. But what to do?"

This time Victor was hard hit. Sibyl's rapid emergence from childhood interested him; her freshness, the unexpected way in which her mind worked, were attractive. Her great beauty of face appealed to him. He knew now what had happened. As he did everything in excess, now he told Anne Vincent that he loved the girl.

"It is not true," she said, indignant. "You do not. You cannot."

"No, I don't!" he cried. "I do not know. Why did Mrs. North tell you? As to loving her, I said then I did not."

"Then why do you lie about it?"

"Sometimes I must," he said, "and, indeed, I am greatly troubled. I do wish all of you would let me alone—as if I did not know."

Mrs. Vincent took no notice of this appeal.

"The girl is very weak, very sick, Victor. At least, so says Owen North. If—if she should fall ill, or die, do you think you would be blameless?"

"I know," he cried, "I know!" and went away, flying like a scared bird that has no resort but flight. He had a human inclination to get away from a place where anything unpleasant had occurred. No one asked him to go. He had behaved well of late. I saw no reason why he should go.

This time he was gone until September. He wrote to me, and spoke of all of us except Miss Maywood, and meanwhile we had scattered for the summer.

Before we left, Clayborne had talked to me very freely of Sibyl's health. We had agreed, however, among ourselves to be careful as to what we said to him. If Clayborne had understood the situation, he would have been more watchful. As usual, the mischief-maker had fled, and to have warned Clayborne now would only have made certain a rupture between him and St. Clair. We continued to hope that absence and wholesome society would have for the secretary their usual value. The extent and quality of the morbidness due to uncertain health and a background of emotional temperament even I did not as yet appreciate. It was clear to me before St. Clair went away that he was filled with distress at what his folly had brought about. I had seen him before this in like trouble and annoyed at the obvious result of his own folly, but never before had he shown any notable regret or acknowledged that he was to blame.

XIV

THE Vincents had rented a small farmhouse on Frenchman's Bay, upon the shores of Mount Desert Island, and we, —my wife and child and I,—having accepted their invitation, settled down for a long stay in the delightful summer climate of Maine. It was still half wilderness; the people simple and interesting, with a flavor of the salt seas and fish. The hills were trackless, the roads bad, and the contrast with our city life very grateful to us all. Vincent's yacht lay at anchor in the bay, and there were boats and canoes on or at the landing-slip. Clayborne talked of a visit we knew to be improbable, but, as I have said, he had reluctantly given us Sibyl, to my little Mary's joy. I shared the child's satisfaction. In contact with the vigorous mind of Clayborne, Sibyl had assimilated knowledge with such ease as surprised me. Nor did this lessen the spiritual grace of her own individuality. It is true that she had what Vincent called mental, as well as emotional, moods, and was wise and temperately thoughtful at one moment, and again childlike or overfull of sentiment. In this perfect air, where the seaside climatic conditions are modified by the nearness of mountains, she swiftly gained health, and with it self-control. Yet, as we all saw, she had undergone some

radical change. She was more decisive, and at times seemed older. I was puzzled by her as I am rarely puzzled. She spoke tranquilly of St. Clair, saying without trace of emotion that we must miss him, and when would he come?

My wife said to me one day: "I have had a long talk with Sibyl. She likes St. Clair, but I am sure she has not lost her heart. She discussed him quite coldly, Owen. Sometimes her acuteness is remarkable. She said he was self-full rather than selfish; that he cared too much for his art, and would be—no, might be unhappy if he married; and then—'But is n't he a charming companion?' She does not love him, Owen, I am sure of that."

"Perhaps not; but if not," said I, "how explain that scene in the garden? In some way he disturbs her, but whether consciously to her or not I cannot say."

My wife was silent a moment, and then replied: "If Sibyl were two people I could comprehend it."

I had seen enough of the double consciousness of some hysterias to feel no surprise at this flash of feminine insight.

"That is not impossible," I said. "I will think about it." Very soon I had still more cause to reflect.

One day I had failed to find St. Clair's last address in his letter, and, thinking to discover it on the envelop, I searched my table and waste-paper basket. It is a valuable habit of mine never to destroy an envelop until the inclosure has been read. I was, therefore, sure that I had left the missing envelop on

a table beside my desk. I went away a little thoughtful to take my afternoon pull on the water. As I passed I heard Sibyl call from her favorite nest in a hammock: "May I go with you?"

I said: "Yes, of course. Delighted to have you."

"Then the canoe, please."

I settled her comfortably on the red cushions in the birch, and knelt, Indian fashion, in the stern, facing her, as I paddled out on to the broad waters of Frenchman's Bay.

"Let us not talk for a while," she said.

My profession has taught me respect for the moods of other people. She wanted silence. So did I. I used the paddle quietly, and we stole out a mile from the shore on water without a ripple. To left the setting sun cast its light laterally across the bay. The sea was a vast glow of crimson. Far away the Gouldsborough hills were like domes of ruddy bronze. Overhead the splendor of scarlet and rose faded toward the zenith, to glow again in the east above the Mount Desert hills. I ceased to paddle, and lay back in the stern. As Sibyl looked across the water at the changing tints of rose-gold on low-lying clouds over the mainland, I watched her face, and observed once more the indescribable look of serene spirituality. I might wrestle long with the incapacities of language and still be unable to set on paper what was so plain to my eyes. I resolved that she should be first to crack what El-Din-Attar calls "the egg of silence." I waited long, the birch drifting. Now and then a faint breeze here and there fretted the water. On these wind-ruffled spaces the cloud shadows lay,

dark purple islands amid the shimmering plane of red. Far away a frail mist filled the air, and near by iridescent lights, with a wonder of changeful colors, glanced or glowed on the water. Between us and the setting sun two great coasting-schooners moved slowly; their ample sails, set against the scarlet sea and sky, appeared of a pallid green, like the delicate underwing of the katydid. At last Sibyl spoke.

"Do you think that bad people ever really enjoy beautiful things?"

"I fear they do. There were those terrible Italian despots, Malatestas, Medici, and their kind. And some very good folks, I fancy, get nothing out of nature, Sibyl. The Italian of that day loved the beautiful in art. I doubt, on second thought, if nature, as we speak of it, appealed to him."

She was still a moment, and then said: "I am glad that nature was not intimate with those terrible people."

"What an odd way to put it, Sibyl!"

"Is it? I do not like that bad people should find in all this what we find. It seems very near to me; sometimes I seem a part of it, or it of me. Do not you feel that sometimes?"

I smiled gently, and looking out over the splendor of the evening lights wondered if I had really any of the feeling she expressed.

"Oh," she cried, "when I say these things you do not even answer. You smile. It is not fair. You are very vexing at times, my good, dear doctor. I told something like this to the master last month,

and he just said, 'What, what, girl!' Then I quoted to him:

> For head with foot hath private amitie,
> And both with winds and tides.
> His eyes dismount the farthest star,
> He is in little all the sphere.
> Herbs gladly cure our flesh because that they
> Find their acquaintance there.

When I finished he asked if that were Emerson or a charade. I never puzzled him before as to a quotation, unless it were modern. He affects to know only certain writers. He has read, voraciously, everything."

I said: "No wonder he did not know. You picked out the lines best fitted to puzzle."

"And you know?"

"Certainly I do. Did he say no more?"

"Yes. When I told him who wrote them, he said: 'I never have felt that kinship to nature, but here is what Pico della Mirandola said: "It is a commonplace of the schools that man is a little world in which may be discerned a body mingled of earthly elements and ethereal breath, and also of the vegetable life of plants and the senses of lower animals, and reason, and the intelligence of angels, and a likeness to God."' When he saw how this pleased me, the master advised me to read concerning Pico, his life by Sir Thomas More. Oh, dear! I tried it!"

I laughed with reminiscent sympathy.

"I had to give up that book," she said. "I hate some books. You cannot answer a book. And some

books do have such bad manners. In one I read last week there was something about this very matter."

"What did it say, Sibyl?"

"Oh, that to give imagined life and thought and feeling and sympathy to tree or sea or hill or flower was pure nonsense; that to cultivate and accept such beliefs was silly and even unwise, mere superstitions of the imagination."

"I 'd rather be
A pagan suckled in a creed outworn,"

I quoted.

"Yes, indeed. It is the things you cannot prove that are the best of life."

"Go on," I said. "I am, I was, smiling, but only with, not at, you."

"Perhaps," she said, "as we surely are of the God who set us here, so must there be in all that he has made some mystery of kinship. It seems an essential part of me, this desire to feel in nature sympathies of relation."

"You find," I returned, "as I do, something solemn in this blaze of evening scarlet, something of the same feeling in deep woods, the sense of serene peace in a mountain lake, of joy in wild waters."

"Yes, yes," she said; "and although I cannot explain it, I know, I feel, that it is a part of my rightful property."

"But is not that, Sibyl, very different from presuming that nature feels for or with you?"

"It must. It does."

"There is no harm in the belief, my dear Sibyl. It

is not a bad belief. If there be in it a mysterious satisfaction, it harms no one. Nature thus loved and dealt with will not make of you a mystic."

"Now, there is something I do want to talk about, mystery and mysticism. What is the line between them? I remember one evening at Holmwood Mr. St. Clair tried to get a definition of 'mystical' out of my cousin, but he would not reply, or something turned the talk aside."

"And now you think I will answer?"

"Yes. It left me with a desire to hear more."

"What is a mystic? Perhaps I may be best able to exemplify what in my mind is very distinct. The man who finds plant-forms or what not growing in threes, and in that discovers relations to the Trinity, is so far a mystic. When I recognize anything as mysterious I want to understand it. The mystic invents mystery, and casts a shroud of perplexing inadequacies, of fanciful explanation, about the simple. There is much that is probably forever unknowable, but let us not add needlessly to the inexplicable."

"I think I see," she said thoughtfully. "But," she returned, "as to this sympathetic relation of nature with me, I have to confess it as affectionately held and not capable of proof, like—well, like some other grave things which we cannot prove, like—well, like what a great love must be."

"But we can prove that your thesis about nature is not true. You may not wish to do so, but do not confuse yourself."

"I like to confuse myself."

"I abandon the field," said I, laughing.

"Oh, Dr. North, are n't you hardened by science until all mystery is distressful to you?"

"Between mystery and mysticism let us once more draw the line. You have the temperament of the mystic. The mysterious is attractive to you only because it is mysterious. That is the mystic."

"Am I? Perhaps."

The talk fell away as twilight cast her veil of shadows on the face of the dead day. Presently Sibyl said with hesitative shyness: "I was naughty to-day, Dr. North." Here was another Sibyl, the child.

"Indeed? And how, little woman?"

"I took an envelop from your table."

Then I understood. The naïveté of such a confession was astounding.

"Well, what then? 'T is no great crime. But why take it?" It seemed best to me to go through the path thus opened.

"I saw it was Mr. St. Clair's writing. I wanted it. I had a fancy to see if I could find his character in his writing."

"Ah! His character. Well!"

"Was there any harm in it?"

"Oh, no. But why not have asked me to show you his letters?"

"Yes, that would have been better."

"Sometimes no one can read them," I said. "I do not think that writing shows character. Writing is formed, as to its peculiarities, in youth, and before that complex thing, character, is fully constructed. Nor as character alters does the writing of the man show change."

"That seems to dispose of the beliefs of some people as to handwriting."

"Yes. Once it is well formed, the permanence of the form a man's script has is remarkable. I had once a terrible case of hysterical palsy. This girl in turn wrote with her right hand steadied by the left, then with the left, then at last with a pen held in her teeth. All of this variously produced script was practically the same, was decided by an expert to be written by one person."

Sibyl sat quiet a little while, as she was apt to do when considering something of interest. Then she sat up rather abruptly and said, "Mr. St. Clair—"

"What, Sibyl?"

"Mr. St. Clair is on the water. I hear him coming."

"Nonsense."

"I do, doctor. Do not you hear?" She was plainly excited. She sat up erect of a sudden, staring down the bay.

"Lie down. Keep still, Sibyl." I feared more hysterics, and this, in a frail birch half a mile from land, presented me with a new terror. "Take care," I said. "Lie still."

"But he is coming."

Her voice betrayed her excitement.

"Well, what then? Sit still."

My own ear now detected the splash of a paddle. I turned toward the landing. Another boat drew near. As we paddled in through the dark, I heard St. Clair call: "Is that you, Owen North? Good evening, Miss Maywood."

To my surprise, she was suddenly as quiet as any woman of half a dozen social campaigns. I felt relieved. She had come again, for the time, into healthy self-command of her unstable temperament.

As we walked toward the house, St. Clair said: "Glad to see you. I have been camped on Iron Bound Island, and then on the shore at Seal Harbor. As you know, for I wrote from Portland, I came in my canoe by sea from New York. Last night my little tent took fire. I could not find a corner in the village, and so here I am. Luckily, Owen, your clothes fit me. I have not a garment except what is on me."

I was a little annoyed, thinking of Sibyl, but the poet was made welcome, and it was soon clear that Sibyl was mistress of herself. She neither sought nor shunned St. Clair, and his too-attentive pleasure in her serene and tender face had apparently gone the way of many another such possession. Very soon we all felt easier, and he was so charming a companion that not to be glad of his company was impossible. My wife declared herself reassured. And yet, as we walked and drove, or boated and sailed on these lovely waters, and the weeks went by, I was not altogether at ease about this singular young woman. At times she was too self-absorbed, at times too silent; and yet at no time was she otherwise with St. Clair than to appearance frank and natural. For a long time I hesitated to believe that his mere presence affected her without her being consciously aware of it. It seemed to Alice an absurd idea, one of my queer notions, she said. I have several. Some I keep muzzled. Some not even my wife knows. This idea kept firm

hold of me. I watched her more closely than did the others, and, in fact, she was both friend and patient. As part of my systematic care I obliged her to rest much in the hammock and to go to bed at nine. After she thus left us an indefinite sense of relief was present. Then, and never before, St. Clair was apt to go to the piano and sing or improvise, giving way to the varying mood of the hour, like the mere child of genius he was when set free from the constraint of conventional society. One evening he had been chanting bits of wild lullabies picked up in Borneo, when Mrs. Vincent said: "Victor, tell us of your voyage."

"Certainly; but, first, here is a queer thing. You may remember that Alcott bought, years ago, my Indian standing unarmed on a peak of the Catskills, looking down sadly on the land where once his tribe had hunted. Alcott failed, and at the sale of his gallery Xerxes bought my chief. I grieve to say it cost him very little."

"That is rather odd," remarked Vincent.

"Look out for mischief," said I.

"But what," said Mrs. Vincent, "can he do?"

"I do not know," I replied. "The devil is ingenious. He may roast it to make lime of it."

"Well," said St. Clair, "we shall see. By the way, did I tell you how he came to relate that tale about the honor of the Wampum family?"

"No; what was it?"

"I went one day to his house to change the time of a sitting. There I saw the new Mrs. Xerxes, Mrs. Gladwyn that was. She has him well in hand. She

is tall, very handsome, rather full-blown; a lady, to my surprise."

"I knew her," said Mrs. Vincent, "when she was Miss Van Osten. She was a well-bred, rather cold and stately girl. She married Gladwyn, an Englishman of good Dorset stock. He ill-treated her, and, dying, left her poor."

"And so she has polished Mr. Xerxes?" said Vincent.

"Yes, most notably. She was very civil, of course, and did not overdo it. When I declined to dine with them, she said simply that perhaps they might be more fortunate another day. When Xerxes, who must be forgiving, urged it, I saw her cleverly signal him, and at this he dropped it, and asked me to look at his new Meissonier. It was labeled '*Honneur*.' A pale young man stood before a table littered with papers. Opposite sat an old man, the father, I presume. The old man's face was cold and stern. He was handing a pistol to the son. The story was plain —disgrace, shame; there was but one thing to do, as the old man saw it. As I stood charmed with the picture, I said, 'He must atone by death. How distinctly the tale is told! Disgrace, honor, death.' 'That young fellow,' said Xerxes, 'he don't seem to like it. He is no such darned fool.' 'The young man is a coward,' said madam. 'I am for the father.' Xerxes glanced at her, a quick look of surprise and curiosity. Evidently neither his social education nor his knowledge of Mrs. Crofter was quite complete. He said: 'I wonder if the old man will pay the bills. I would n't. I should have advised Texas. I told my

son Peter that once.' 'Then,' said madam, flushing a little, 'if you are in earnest, which I doubt, you had better repent and settle.' It was lightly said, but it answered. 'If you like,' said Xerxes, coolly. 'I did n't mean that Peter did worse than get in debt. I would delight to be able to oblige you, only that I paid up long ago. That honor business is a queer thing.' It was apropos of this that I was told the story. I fancy there may have been bills to pay for Peter, his son. Xerxes is founding libraries, endowing asylums, and altogether is worked pretty shrewdly. He ought to be interesting on the question of honor. It is by no means easy to define."

"I happen to have here," said Vincent, "one of Clayborne's books in which he marked for me a passage to illustrate this very matter." As he spoke he took up an old copy of "Reliquiae Wottonianae." "The book is interesting," he said. "See this. On a blank page is written, 'Susanna Hopton, Her Booke'; and underneath, '*Given by her unknown generous friend, Mr. Izaac Walton. Ex libris Tho. Hopton*, 1695.' I should like to know more of it, and how the dear old angler was generous, and why unknown. But let me read the passage:

"'Upon *Munday* vvas seven-night fell out another quarrel, nobly carried (branching from the former) between my Lord *Fielding* and Mr. *Goring*, Son and Heir to the Lord of that Name. They had been the night before at Supper, I know not vvere, together; vvere Mr. *Goring* spake something in diminution of my Lord *Weston*, vvich my Lord *Fielding* told him, it could not become him to suffer, lying by the side of

his Sister. Thereupon, these hot hearts appoint a meeting next day morning, themselves alone, each upon his Horse. They pass by *Hide-Park*, at a place vvere they might be parted too soon, and turn into a Lane by *Knights-Bridge;* vvere having tyed up their Horses at a Hedge or Gate, they got over into a Close; ther stripped into their Shirts, vvith single Rapiers, they fell to an eager Duel, till they vvere severed by the Host and his servants of the Inne of the Prince of *Orange*, vvho by meer chance had taken some notice of them. In this noble encounter, vvherein blood vvas spent, though (by God's providence) not much on either side, ther passed between them a very memorable interchange of a piece of courtesie, if that vvord may have room in this place; Sayes my Lord *Fielding*, Mr. *Goring* "if you leave me here, let me advise you not to go back by *Piccadillia-hall*, lest if mischance befall me, and be suddenly noised (as it falleth out in these occasions now between us) you might receive some harm by some of my friends that lodge thereabouts." "My Lord (replyes *Goring*) I have no vvay but one to answer this courtesie: I have here by chance in my Pocket a Warrent to pass the Ports out of *England*, vvithout a Name (gotten, I suppose, upon some other occasion before). If you leave me here, take it for your use, and put it in your own name." This is a passage much commended, as proceeding both from sweetness and stoutness of spirit, vvhich are very compatible.'"

"How pretty that is—the 'sweetness and stoutness of spirit'! The passage is new to me."

"I suppose," returned Vincent, "to go back on our

talk a little, that however much a man like Xerxes may change, many of the finer qualities of more high-minded natures must remain to him mere riddles, delicacies of conduct he can never know."

"Yes; that seems likely," I said. "An old writer says of honor that 'it is the sweete extravagance of honestie,' but while I agree that it is impossible to define it, to illustrate it is tempting."

"What a pretty bit of old-time gossip!" said Mrs. Vincent, who had listened smiling. "How far away from one like Mr. Crofter! And yet I should like to know him. I have always felt sure that I shall."

"Feminine curiosity," said Vincent, "has cost the world pretty dear. Be thankful that occasionally, as now, it never can be gratified. Let us drop Xerxes. But what of the voyage, Victor?"

"Oh, I wrote all about it to Owen."

"I never saw your letters," said my wife, reproachfully. "Owen has so trained himself to hold his tongue that I never, never hear anything."

"I could not read his letter," said I. "An intoxicated beetle, just out of an ink-pot and crawling over the page, would have scrawled his maudlin dreams as clearly." Having said thus much in my defense, I went out and brought back with me the letter. "Read it yourself," said I.

He took it and, spinning round on the piano-stool, faced us and the letter with a puzzled look. How much of what we heard was letter and how much was added, I do not know.

At last he said: "It is not fair to ask a man to

read his own letters aloud—I mean two weeks after writing them. How can he remember?"

This was greeted with wild laughter, and, thus reviled, he began:

"'I left New York at noon in my Rob Roy canoe, and ran up the Sound, with my little red silk sail spread, and a gentle southwester after me, and much chaff from coasters. Toward evening, next day, I stood out to sea, using my paddle. I soon lost sight of land. Then about midnight I lighted my small lantern, and lay on a moveless ocean under a star-lit sky. I fell back at ease on my cushions. I was folded about with peace as with a mantle. Around me and above was the night, and below the deeper darkness of the sea. A great ocean liner went by a few hundred yards away. I heard the pulse of her propeller, and saw the upheaval of white water at her bow. The touch of peril made sweet the sense of solitude, the voiceless loneliness of the ocean. The darkness deepened toward dawn. A strange feeling of the imminence of death possessed me. All life was so far away, with its busy contradictions of life's inevitable ending. I was alone as God is alone, as the unpeopled stars are alone. I seemed to be a soul in space, thought-bereft, without hopes or memories, a child-soul drifting on to alien shores. Then a great white bird swept by on hesitative wing, and far to the east the day welled up on the edge of the night; and so a gentle joy fell upon me, and I slept till the fuller light wakened me, saying, "Here is time again."' The rest," he said, "is worthless." Upon this he turned to the piano and sang

song after song. He rose at last, and said: "I have kept the floor rather long, dear people. Good night." Then he turned back, and said: "Have you ever at evening on the ocean, alone, watched a gull hovering overhead, he and you alone, both silent?"

"I have been in that good company," said I.

"Then you will like this. I made it while I watched him. I have never written it." He played some sort of improvised accompaniment, and chanted, or rather intoned. It was not singing.

We rose silently. No words can convey the effect he could produce when in one of these rapt moods. I have never seen any one else who had this power.

"Thank you," said my wife. "Leave us with this to dream on. Come, Anne."

A moment after the women had gone, I heard Mrs. Vincent say, as they went up-stairs, "Who could have spilled candle-grease on the rail and stairs, too?"

As the bedroom candles were set on a table at the head of the stairway, I understood why she was surprised, and then I forgot it in a medical pamphlet "On Displacements of the Colon." Vincent, who has a mania as to punctuation, fell on to it greedily next day, and was much disgusted when he discovered it to be only medical.

While I was dressing next morning, Mrs. Vincent knocked and asked me to see Sibyl before I breakfasted. I found Miss Maywood in bed, and was more than ever struck with her singular beauty. The spinal distortion was, of course, unseen as she lay with her perfect hands outside of the cover. I have as a physician a great horror of deformities. They

usually represent incompetence, vice, neglect, or ignorance. Because some doctor did not know his business this girl was to be whipped through life with a lash he would never feel. Sibyl's first welcome was usually a smile like the ready smile of childhood—mysterious coinage before mirth is conscious. Now she did not smile. Clearly she was not well, had slept ill, and, as I found, had a slight fever. It was nothing, she said. I advised rest for a day.

As I went from her bedside I saw something which caused me to take Mrs. Vincent aside after breakfast. I said to her: "Last night, after Sibyl left us, she heard St. Clair reading or singing. She went halfway down the stair and listened. He began just after she left us."

"How do you know that, Owen North?"

"She dropped candle-grease on the stair and also on her gown."

"Oh, I am glad you are not my doctor. And what next?"

"I do not think that she knew what she was doing."

"Can that be?"

"Yes. I do not suppose that she realizes her own condition. Perhaps she never will. The mischief is done. It is vain to talk to her. Common sense is a tonic which here is useless. Time, which some one brutally called the opium of grief, time will not help her."

"Then this is serious? Her physical state, I mean, and this condition of somnambulism, or double consciousness. It seems to me horrible, Owen, to be and not to be yourself."

"Yes; it is perplexing."

Mrs. Vincent stood still. "I have come to love this girl more than I thought I could love so peculiar a person. Is there no way to help her? What can we do or help you to do? St. Clair must not know. He is more really sorry for what has occurred than I ever saw him about anything. He thinks it is over; that it was on her side a brief fancy. But he does not like to talk of it or of her. I have sometimes thought—but no matter."

"Ah, me!" I said. "First some fool costs her this crippled life, then this unthoughtful fellow adds an unendurable pain. And yet, how could he dream that she is a woman capable of love, of passion, of despair? We are apt not to credit physical incompleteness with the moral or even the mental equipment of the physically competent."

"Yes, that is true. I myself have the feeling. Poor Sibyl! I see it all now. At times she gives way to emotion as in the garden, or as she did last night. And then there is a new Sibyl. It is a strange nature. I suppose this is what you doctors call hysteria. Dr. Randolph comes to-morrow for a week, and she is to go back with him, and will remain at Holmwood. I must write to Clayborne as to her work, or you had better do so."

"Very good. I will do it. And do not be troubled; it is only temporary."

In fact, Sibyl grew slowly better, and then very suddenly was herself. Meanwhile St. Clair was twice absent for two days in his canoe.

I was glad to talk with Randolph about my patient.

He listened with medical patience, and then could not agree with me. Plainly anemia was the trouble. Yes, but what caused it? He took a great fancy to Miss Maywood. He carried with him what Vincent called "the robust atmosphere of a life of success." He rowed her about on the bay, set her on a pony and led it, or read to her as she lay in the hammock, betraying no evidence of intimate knowledge of her life. She grew better, and I tried to think I had been wrong as to her condition. But that something was mysteriously affecting her I still saw but too plainly.

Finally St. Clair left us again in his usual abrupt way, talking of it for a week beforehand, and, without other warning, was gone one morning at break of day.

And now September had come. The boarders in the village, and what the inhabitants then called "the mealers and team-mealers," were gone. We seemed once more to own the woods and waters.

One perfect day early in this month of weather moods, we ran across Frenchman's Bay, and skirted the north shore under easy sail, scarce moving on a quiet ocean. Mrs. Vincent had at last agreed to go if we could rely upon tranquil seas. We ran along after luncheon in sight of the Gouldsborough hills, and in and out among islands, and close to the bold cliffs of Iron Bound. We exhausted epithets as the day wore on. The mountains on Mount Desert began to glow with the hazy violet tints of evening, while the islands hid from us one of the ugliest towns on the coast of New England.

As we moved with a scarce-felt wind, Sibyl and I

were walking the deck, while I pointed out the various Porcupine islands. At last I said, "That is Iron Bound yonder."

"Yes," she returned, "where Mr. St. Clair camped. I am glad he went away. We used to be such good friends, but of late he has quietly dropped me. He is really a strange man. I wonder what I could ever have done to make him avoid me."

I turned sharply to look at the maker of this critical speech.

"I thought you liked him," I said.

"I did. I do. No one can help liking him. I think I understand him better than at first. I did at first think him a sort of continuous riddle. He was rather bewildering to a simple young woman."

Suddenly a thought struck me. "See those gulls, Sibyl. Have you ever heard St. Clair sing 'The Seagull'? Watch that rover now."

"No," she said, "never. It must be a new song. I do not know why, but he never sings early in the evening, and I am in bed by your orders, sir, at nine; also, I sleep at once and well."

So, then, she had not consciously heard St. Clair sing. Of this I was sure. Here was stuff for reflection. Sibyl said presently: "I want to ask Dr. Randolph something. I have been trying to recall what it was; now I have it. Excuse me, I must ask him."

Did she desire to escape further question? That was most unlikely. I followed her, thoughtful. She was absolutely truthful. That she must have heard St. Clair sing the night before her small illness was to my mind certain. I was driven to the conclusion

that this woman had ceased to love St. Clair, if, indeed, she had ever loved him, but that in some state of unresisting dual consciousness she was the victim of an overmastering passion. The thought seemed to explain a good deal which had appeared to me incomprehensible.

Meanwhile Miss Maywood had crossed the deck, and joined the good old Tory doctor and the rest of the party. She at once reminded him that he had not fulfilled his promise to tell us or read to us the remaining portions of his grandmother's diary.

"I did not forget," he said, "but when I came to look it over with care I found that it dwelt merely on the commonplaces of a happy life. Cyrilla's child became my mother. She, too, married late in life. Her uncle is worth remembering. He never entirely forgave his sister's double change of religion—that is, he said he could not; but no one ever saw him other than most affectionate to her. He was an admirable example of the orthodox Quaker, charitable, kindly, religious, and a steady adherent to every ancient usage of Friends. Assuredly he never forgot the cruel ill-treatment his father, like many other Tories, met with at the hands of the Whigs. Up to the time of his last and only illness, he protested in writing whenever he paid taxes, and never voted, declaring himself to be still a subject of the King of England."

"How delightful!" said my wife. "I wonder some of the Anglophiles do not revive this custom."

"He did more," added Randolph. "Like the old Friends, he used stimulants in reasonable amount. Once a month he gathered all of his family at an

early dinner. Then he had a bowl of punch, and himself drank out of a curious horn cup which his ancestor brought from England. Before drinking, he said, 'To the king.' He remained loyal to the crown, dying at a great age, the last of the Tories."

"They were harshly treated," said I. "They went away in numbers to Canada. To-day you find some of the best blood of New England scattered along the desolate shores of Gaspé and Labrador. Men of the uneducated class rarely emigrate for mere sentiment. These were people of the upper classes. Now they are fishers, smiths, or small farmers. The environment has been too hopelessly sterile of chances. Of course others rose to distinction, as the interesting old graveyard of the city of St. John's still shows."

"I have some sad records," said Randolph, "of the hatred felt for the Tories. What with personal violence and confiscations, they were very hardly used. Those who were in arms for the king may have given cause, if not excuse, but many, not all of the Society of Friends, were really neutral, and in some cases paid dear for their inoffensive loyalty."

"We must have changed greatly," said Vincent. "Where else has a great civil war ended without cruel retribution and wholesale confiscation?"

"Every one was weary of slaughter," said Randolph.

"No," said Vincent, "it was not that. We are changing as a nation—I should say as a race, for only one breed really expresses itself in our story. The race which gave us a language is our race despite the various tribes it, like the motherland, has swallowed. No other race has such assimilative capacity. I think

the language has something to do with that. It is a conquering tongue. I am talking rather slackly, Randolph, but to thresh all this out would be tedious, at least here. It is, at all events, sure that we are to-day a gentler-minded people than we were, and perhaps than are our cousins across the sea."

"A good many of thy theses I shall like to discuss and dispute," said Randolph. "Certainly amid all the horrors of our great war—"

I knew how much Mrs. Vincent disliked what we others liked, "a good war talk." I therefore interrupted the good doctor, as if I had not heard him. He was about to resume when Sibyl, who was using my glass, exclaimed: "What a pretty little town set among the trees, and so many boats and nets on the shore, and dories, and, oh, men in 'ilers'—is n't that correct? I seem to smell fish and tar. If Mr. St. Clair were here he would put it into verse."

Welcoming the interruption, I said: "Everything pretty is in verse somewhere."

"Find it," said Vincent. "Come now, Mrs. North, Sibyl."

"Will this do?" she said. "I learned it a week ago.

"The wind blows coldly from the north
On winter dawns, when in the gray
Dim light the fisherfolk set forth,
And in their dories ride away.

"All day a golden sunlight sleeps
On the gray town; and hour by hour
The sea its calm reflection keeps
All golden as a golden flower."

"How simple, how effective!" said I; "and the rest?"

"I do not know any more. There is more."

"No one cares for verse in these days," said I. "I know many men who have not read a line of it for years. The young no longer read it. There was a time when verse was the best-paid form of literary product. Now who buys poetry?"

"And yet," said Mrs. Vincent, a great lover of verse, "it is, as I see it, a natural mode of expressing thought. The first history is in verse. Children like to rhyme."

"And some insane folks," said I, "if that will help you."

"Is it," said Vincent, "because we have become more critical that verse seems to us artificial?"

"No," said Randolph, "it is not that. It is more artificial than it once was. The early verse was of and for the people. Who writes for them now? Verse became by degrees the luxury of the refined. Can you interest the laborer or mechanic in any verse which any man writes to-day? To do that he must use their tongue, know their ways; and when such verse as this comes to life it will be simple. We want an American Burns. He will have a hearing."

"There was an age in all nations when music and lyric verse were inseparable," said Vincent. "It must have been in the blood of Elizabeth's time, but of that we have talked more than once. And speaking of this naturalness of verse as a vehicle of thought, when I told Clayborne that he must admit that men when dying would be apt to be natural, he

said promptly, 'No, never less so,' and that the making of verse at such times was a decisive argument against verse being natural. This rather anticipated my argument by strangling the premise."

"I recall the talk," said I. "We mentioned the case of the second Essex, the doubtful one of Raleigh, Tichborne's, and the sad instance of Everard Digby, who spent the day before his execution in writing execrable verse to his wife and children. There are others."

"And," said my wife, "it was so like Mr. Clayborne to turn on us with no end of illustrations to help the argument, our argument."

"The queerest," added Mrs. Vincent, "were Oriental. He said, as I understood him, that several of the princes of the house of Othman, when condemned to the bowstring, asked for a respite of some hours that they might express their death-thought in verse."

"I," said my wife, "can in no way conceive of that as possible. You forgot the French cases, and especially that of André Chénier."

"Yes, quite true," I said. "Since the ballad died and the song has gone out of the every-day life of men, I suspect that poetry has become such that only the cultivated class are likely to care for it, and they, it seems, care but little."

"And yet," said Randolph, "how gladly an audience which does not read verse listens to verse, if it be fairly well read aloud!"

"Yes," said Vincent. "When men's memories were the only books and the king's singer his library, no one recited prose. There is some charm in words

read aloud as compared with those which only the eye sees. The ear must attend. It cannot shut out the spoken words. It has no lids. See how readily some fluent fool on the platform captures an audience. You or they must go back to cool print to recover reason. The eye corrects the ear. The fate of a nation's honor may hang on this fact."

"That is all true, Vincent," I said. "It would be clearer if stated at greater length."

"Yes," said my wife. "I did not quite follow the thought."

"And yet you must recall, Alice, my reading to you and your cousins that poem of Woodville's. It is spirited, vigorous, made for recitation. It visibly stirred two women of not very imaginative nature. Miss Margaret said to me afterward, 'I read that soberly after you left. There is not much in it.' I said, 'Soberly! Why, it describes a charge of cavalry. Shout it. Can you blow a trumpet soberly?'"

"I wish," said Mrs. Vincent, "verse were like music, and had always to be heard."

"I think," said Vincent, "that, with us, the people's poet has yet to come. But even to-day now and then some rare bit of verse captures the popular ear, some poem echoes the mood of the nation, and shows how one man can justify the use of verse to say nobly, as prose cannot, what is in the heart of every one."

"I fancy," said Mrs. North, "that the higher poetry never has had in any time a great audience."

"And is it not strange," said Mrs. Vincent, "that all the great national songs came from the minor poets?"

"Indeed," said my wife, "that is no doubt true. I never thought of it before. But I hate the adjective 'minor' applied to poets. No one says minor novelists. By the way, Anne, Haydn's 'Austrian Hymn' is the one piece of really great national music composed by a musician of celebrity. The minor poets wrote the great national songs, and the minor musicians fitted them to music; but why, Anne,"—and she turned again to Mrs. Vincent,—"does the adjective 'minor' applied to the lesser poets seem so objectionable to me? I have heard you say the same thing. It sounds reasonably descriptive. As usual, I find myself unable to defend my opinion in words."

"Because," said Mrs. Vincent, "you cannot classify poets. Do you judge by the quality of verse? Then at times the great masters are very minor poets, or the reverse is true. Do you judge by the vitality of verse? Who wrote the hymns we love the best, the songs, the ballads? The minor poets, surely. A delightful golden—may I say silver?—treasury could be made out of our minor poets. I should not object to be called any kind of a poet, were I ever so small a poet. St. Clair is furious when a critic describes him as a minor poet."

"And yet he is," said Vincent.

"Are you a minor lawyer?" said I.

"Yes," cried Vincent, laughing, "and I abide by my adjective. As to poetry, the law has produced no poets. I am excused by the despotism of statistics. I am a lawyer, therefore I cannot be a poet."

"Oh, was not Goethe?" ventured Sibyl.

"Yes, I suppose so," he replied, laughing. "Some one always annihilates my efforts at generalization."

Mrs. Vincent scarcely approved of any one's correcting her husband. She never did so herself without an apology. Now she said: "Sibyl, you have lived too long in Mr. Clayborne's society, and,"—smiling,—"you know, dear, accuracy is very destructive of conversation."

"And of poetry," said Vincent.

"The sad fact remains," said Randolph, "few people read verse. I myself find it hard to understand the intelligent life which finds no pleasure or help in good verse. To write it well must be an indescribable joy."

"And yet," said Miss Maywood, demure as a kitten, "folks wickedly credit you with being pessimistic."

Mrs. Vincent turned to Sibyl, amused at this bold onset.

"I a pessimist! My dear young lady, thou art wrong. I am only an old fellow who, from the mountain summit of years, sees truly the world below him. I see disaster, failure, corruption, a people indifferent except to money, laws made only to be broken, unanswerable questions ahead of us, like that of the negro. The angels must grin at this final experiment in democracy. It is sad to look down on it, as I do, from the serenity of years."

Amused by the fine certainties of this confident and cheerful old gentleman, Vincent said dryly: "The world looks flat from mountain-tops. But what, Sibyl, is the connection in your mind between poet and, shall I venture to say, pessimist?"

"Only this: the great poets are never pessimists."

"I think," said Randolph, "thou must be getting better. The sick are pessimistic."

"Indeed, I am better," she said, "and I think your dark views of the country and the future are pure humbug."

"My dear Sibyl!" exclaimed Mrs. Vincent.

"Oh, but let me end," she cried, coloring. "The good doctor is a priceless friend. Everything near and personal he believes in with undying faith, and everything large and remote he criticizes severely. If that be a real pessimist, we must emend the dictionaries."

No one could help laughing. The courage and truth of the statement were startling.

"I bow to the verdict, and thank thee for the compliment," said Randolph, in his old-fashioned manner.

"Well, there goes the anchor," said Vincent. "We are at home again."

XV

E liked at Bar Harbor to dine at six or else after eight, so as to be free for the sunset time. Thus it came about that one day at evening we were on the lawn, a hundred feet from the shore. The tide was slowly moving up the bay. The scene was set in gold. The sky was aglow with dark, orange-tinted clouds; the sea, a shimmering plane of paler gold; the Gouldsborough hills domes of darkling gold.

Said Randolph: "I have been reflecting upon the verdict of pessimist which Miss Maywood pronounced upon me."

"There is time to reform," said I.

"Oh, you are all optimists. Wait awhile; time converts most women and all men to pessimism. I think of the world as growing worse. It is to me a failure; I mean the whole of it, not merely this ungoverned country."

Said Sibyl quietly: "Do you think its Maker meant it to be? I mean the world's Maker."

"I do not know."

"And yet you believe as—"

"Yes, as thou dost."

"Then you cannot be a pessimist."

The doctor was quiet for a moment. "I am not

more or worse than a chronic doubter. I am by nature apprehensive. My sense of duty has always been urgent. Had I lacked its higher source I should have been of little use. I have always lived in an atmosphere of doubt as to my creed, myself, the future, as to every one but my friends."

"And yet—" said Sibyl.

"Yes," he returned, "I understand, Friend Sibyl. I shall not take up thy glove. How can I believe as I do and yet think the world so far, and despite Christianity, a failure? I do not say it will be, I say only that so far it is."

"Oh, oh!" I exclaimed. "That is fine. I myself hate the very word 'pessimist.' I think it modern."

"Of the last century," said Vincent. "Was it not St. Clair who said 'doubt is only hope crippled'?"

"Dead lame at times," said Randolph.

"Then it is despair," cried Sibyl.

"I hate St. Clair's morsels of wisdom," said Vincent. "Hope is emotional; doubt is of the mind. Why mix the things?"

"Let me go on," said Randolph. "Set aside America. Can you look at Spain, Italy, France, and not share my belief as to human failure?"

"But," said Vincent, "history is a record of necessary, even of desirable failures. Is not the destruction of the inadequate hopeful? The world has been drowning her bad puppies ever since the world began."

"Are not the four conquering races rising in all ways?" said my wife. "These have futures."

"What?" said the doctor. "Who? What races?"

"England, Russia, America; I add Germany with

doubt. And these are still the religious nations, or rather the peoples with whom religion is a part of their national life."

"And the Turk," said I.

"Yes, even the Turk. It is his honest belief which has made him the capable soldier and kept him in Europe."

"When," said I, "the German becomes like his professors, without religious belief, the French, who are naturally better soldiers, not merely organized war-machines, will go to Berlin. I should be sorry—"

"Pardon me. Who is that on the slip?" said Vincent.

"Miss Norreys, I fancy," said Mrs. Vincent.

"And who, Anne, is Miss Norreys?"

"I met her on Great Head when we went to see the surf in the storm a week ago."

"That does not enlighten me."

"She is English."

"Oh!"

"A governess."

"Ah!"

"Handsome and intelligent."

"That is better."

"She asked leave to sketch here. It is getting too dark now. I wish, Fred, you would go and ask her to join us for tea. Come, I will go with you."

"If you wish, certainly. Is this a new addition to your social menagerie, Anne?" he asked as he rose.

"Cynicism fits you like ready-made clothes, Fred."

"I indorse Mrs. Vincent's views as to Miss Norreys," said Randolph. "I met Miss Norreys in Italy

years ago, and shall be glad to meet her again. I will go with thee, Vincent."

When we saw them returning with the lady in question, my wife went forward to meet them, while Sibyl, rising in her hammock, considered the tall, handsome Englishwoman.

"She is very nice," she said to me, decidedly, while as yet Miss Norreys was a hundred feet away. "I like her." This judgment was pronounced at fifty feet. "She has a friendly face," was whispered at twenty-five feet. "She is friendlikely."

"Not a bad word, Sibyl."

She had a way of coining words which Clayborne disliked, but which St. Clair and I fancied. It seemed to me a relic of the childlike ways which at times came out so distinctly in this interesting nature. Being thus approved of, she smiled one of the many smiles out of a large armament. It said so surely "Thank you," that this little current coin became golden.

We were presented, and Miss Norreys sat down beside Sibyl, and began in a quiet voice to talk of sunsets at Venice or on the Nile. She seemed at once to understand the frail girl in the hammock, so that presently Sibyl glanced at me archly as much as to say, "I was right, you see."

Said Randolph: "I think I saw thee at a distance on Newport Mountain yesterday."

"Yes. I am fond of walking, and my two charges, the Misses Graham, have gone away with their aunt to Quebec for a week. I am free; and to be off sentinel duty for a while is, I assure you, a vast relief.

I never took very kindly to my work as a governess."

"When," said Randolph, "we first met, thou hadst quite another line of business."

"Yes," she returned, smiling, "and I find most people think it a rather queer one."

"May I ask you what it was?" said my wife.

"Certainly. I taught the art of conversation."

"Bless me!" said Sibyl, much amused. "I should like to take lessons."

"I think you might give them," said Miss Norreys.

My wife declared for a class. It should include the art of listening and how to begin a talk.

"And how to end it," I suggested.

"And the gentle art of interruption," cried Mrs. Vincent.

"Make your mind easy as to that," said Vincent, viciously.

"As to the beginnings of talk," said Miss Norreys, "there is a queer little book called 'Conversational Openings,' like chess problems. It is not first-rate, and some people took it frankly. I do not suggest it as a text-book."

"I should think," said I, "that a book like that might be entertaining. My friend Wendell Holmes should have written it. How to end a talk is the difficult art."

"The book is amusing," said Miss Norreys, but might have been much better. It is too—well—obvious. For instance, there is the bread opening, or the salt with remarks on salt superstitions; or the general opening, as, 'What shall we talk about, Miss

Black?' And then, too, there is what I may call the personal gambit. It is like this. I may be inventing, not quoting. Black says: 'Do you know Mrs. Blank? You remind me of her.' White: 'I do not, and I have a curious dislike to being supposed to be like other people.' Black, revising his opinion: 'Oh, I should have said she looks like you.' White: 'That is better. Is she as agreeable as my double ought to be?' etc. It is a hopeful opening."

"I like that," said Randolph. "Tell us more."

"Well, the interrogative gambit affords chances. Black opens: 'Do not you wonder how the modern dinner was evolved?' White fails to accept her chance, and says feebly: 'I really never thought about it.' Stale mate; best to try the woman on the other side. In England, where we rarely present guests, conversation must be an experimental art for a stranger."

"And yet I like your way," said Vincent. "It gives the zest of discovery, of investigation. It has also its awkward side. I once criticized severely to a male dinner neighbor the last work of a well-known novelist. At last he said pleasantly, 'You may be right. I shall do better next time.' Then I knew I had been beside the author."

"But who was it?" said Mrs. Vincent.

"I decline to state."

"I think you are rather cruel," said I.

"When you women retire," said Vincent, "you have an easy game: the servant gambit, the baby gambit, the husband gambit."

"Oh, yes; the book deals largely with these."

"For shame!" said my wife. "And what do you men talk?"

"That you will never know," said Vincent. "One has dinner adventures in England. I once took a dowager in to dinner, or out—which is it they say in England, Miss Norreys?"

"Out, please."

"She fell into chat with her neighbor, and I naturally spoke to the woman on my left. I said: 'One who is strange to London is at some disadvantage with your custom of assuming that every one knows everybody. 'She: 'It seems incredible.' I: 'It is sometimes embarrassing.' She: 'I rarely take soup.' I, accepting the play: 'The national soups might make a curious menu.' She: 'I cannot credit such a story.' I, bewildered: 'Our best soup we call gumbo.' She: 'Yes, the beau has gone out; now it is the—some vulgar word—masher, is n't it?' I, very loud, beginning to suspect the truth: 'Gumbo soup.' She: 'Yes. Gum. Bird-nests. Just so.' She was deaf, and now and then caught on to a word; never asked you to speak louder, and sturdily plunged through without confessing her defect."

"Tell us," said Mrs. Vincent, "how you came to teach conversation."

"Yes, pray do," added my wife.

"With pleasure. My father is a clergyman with a large family of daughters. We took to nursing, newspaper work, or teaching. After two years of school-teaching, I was on my way from London to York to take a new place as governess. The second-class carriages were full, and I was put in a first-class. In it

were two very well-dressed women of middle age. It chanced that I had come to the station with an old aunt who lives in France. She bade me good-by in French, and I replied in the same tongue, chatting until the train moved. I presume that the two women took me to be French. Certainly they talked with great frankness, reassured, I suppose, by my apparent want of interest. I was listening eagerly. 'We had good introductions and went about a lot. Mrs. Laurence told her friends that Susan would have half a million and more to come. But, my dear, you know Susan! She just is n't one bit like most of our girls. She honestly expects those men to amuse her. They just don't. She has n't any talk in her: A man says, "Do you like it here in the season?" and Sue says, "Not awful much," and shuts up like scissors. Then he says, "Awful jolly at Hurlingham; ever been there?" and she says, "You just ought to see Chicago." Usually that man collapses, and they dance, or don't. What can I do?' The other woman said, 'I do think there should be some one to teach conversation.' 'Dear me! I would give ten pounds, oh, guineas a week to find some one to do that. Susan is incredible. Up comes a man, oh, a right nice one, too,—Sir John or Lord Somebody,—and in about two minutes the talk just pines away.' Here was my chance, so I said, 'Pardon me; I can teach conversation, madam.' Indeed, I had had to teach children in a way. 'How much is twice two?' and so on. 'Railly!' She said it very well, and quite like us. She put up a pair of gold eye-glasses and regarded me. 'It would have to be a lady,' she said.

'That is,' I returned, 'a woman of—well—accustomed to society.' 'Yes, that 's about it.' It was good fun, so I went on and said grandly, 'I am a relative of the Earl of C——.' I am, but he is only a second cousin, and I never in my life have seen him, except in 'Punch.' 'He is in the cabinet,' I added. This answered very well, and with some rather clever fencing as to who and what I was and had been, we came to a conclusion. I wired at once, declining the place of governess, and settled down at Bath to teach Susan conversation. It was great fun. She was as shy as a swallow, but 'railly' not stupid. We got on well. She was very pretty, and when, later, in London, I found out who were the men on hand, I got up her talk for the dinners. The rehearsals were fit for the stage. Sometimes the unexpected turned up, and Susan was, as her brother said, 'dead broke.' 'She ain't very suggestive,' he remarked. Nevertheless, she married Lord B——, and, I hope, has not relapsed. My success brought other pupils. I made a good thing of it, and some hearty friendships. At last I was persuaded to come to America with two young women and their mother. I must say they need no coaching in the art of talk."

"Conversation?" said I.

"No, talk. No one under thirty can converse."

"A friend of ours, Mr. Clayborne, would fix the time at forty," said Vincent. "But how did you set about it? Your lessons, I mean."

"Oh, I was the man. We went over no end of subjects, such as politics, fox-hunting, English and American ways. Then we got up a limited list of

brief quotations. Some of these girls were most apt, and not all Americans. It was great fun when Lord B—— fell in love. Susan was frank, and I conducted the affair with—well, I did it admirably until Susan fell in love, too; and after that she grew less confiding. I dropped out as I ceased to learn what passed. When sign-language is added I am at the end of my science."

"Sign-language?" asked Sibyl.

We broke into laughter, and declined to explain.

"Incredibly delightful," said Mrs. Vincent. "Ah, here is the mail. Let us go into the house. I must see my letters. Come, Miss Norreys. No, you cannot go yet. You must have your tea, and we will send you home in the dog-cart whenever you must needs go."

In the house my wife made tea. The talk became general, while Mrs. Vincent, excusing herself, ran over the letters.

"One for you, Fred, and two for you, doctor. Oh, and one from St. Clair. I must read that. Miss Norreys, you will pardon me? Fred, show those photos of Otter Creek to Miss Norreys."

Fred obeyed, chatting over the pictures with Sibyl and Miss Norreys.

Presently Mrs. Vincent said: "Fred, come here. You were right. Read that."

Fred took the letter. "Good gracious!" he exclaimed, laughing. "This is too good to keep."

"What is it?" said I.

"Oh, Xerxes has revenged himself. I was sure he would."

"Xerxes?" said Miss Norreys. "Pardon me. Is that a man's name?"

"Yes," I said, and then Vincent gaily described the great duel between Xerxes and our sculptor. The amazement of the Englishwoman was, as comment, most interesting.

"You certainly must permit me to say that you are an amazing people."

"Wait, Miss Norreys, until you hear the letter. There is a climax. St. Clair is the spoiled child of our little circle."

"What! St. Clair, the poet, the sculptor? I should so much like to see him."

"The letter, the letter!" said we.

"Read it, oh, do read it!" said Sibyl.

"It is long."

"No matter; let us have it."

Thus urged, she read: "'DEAR MRS. VINCENT: Xerxes has got even with me. He presented my Indian chief to a Cuban cigar-shop on Broadway. Now he stands outside for a sign. He draws crowds every day. As Xerxes goes down-town he buys a cigar and grins at my chief.'

"Oh, here is a clipping from the 'Tribunal's' art column: 'The well-known railway man whose bust by St. Clair we noticed must have come to a realizing sense of that too remarkable marble. Is it a vendetta? He has presented St. Clair's noble statue of the "Indian Chief" to Diego's cigar-shop. If it be a vendetta, it is otherwise appreciated by the public, as every one pauses to look at the chief. But what will he do with the bust of the R. R. R.?'"

"That is a railroad robber, Miss Norreys," I explained. "Go on, Mrs. Vincent."

"Pardon me," said Miss Norreys. "You must have very frank newspapers."

Mrs. Vincent continued: "'I wrote and thanked Xerxes for giving the public so good a chance, and advised him to keep the bust for his tombstone, in place of an epitaph. Oh, 't is a very pretty quarrel. I should like to hear what Mrs. Xerxes thinks of it. Let him wallow. Here is something better.

"'I went to Marquette, bought a canoe and a tent, and slipped away at daybreak over Muscakeewininy Gitchie, that is, Big Water, Lake Superior. It was as smooth as a mill-pond. I slept at Grand Isle. Next day at sunset I ran up on the shore, midway of the Pictured Rocks. Here is a beach of pink-and-white pebbles. A cascade falls on to it from the bluff above. East and west stretch cliffs of white sandstone, cut into fantastic forms by the water when the land was lower or the lake higher. From the strata oozes out moisture tinted with the purples of manganese, the greens of copper, the yellows or browns of iron. Lichens, silver, golden, gray, or black, grow where the water trickles forth. At evening I stole out through the twilight in my canoe under the rosy light, with every pebble seen below me in forty feet of water. Here, to my right, is a vast cave facing the lake. It is eighty feet high by a hundred and fifty feet wide, half of a vast dome, a mass of brilliant color like a town afire. A little beyond is a great smooth rock, on which one sees a procession of men in black robes walking over ice,

and before them the headsman with his ax. No one lands here. I went up on to the bluff and saw a bear. He ate berries twelve feet away, apparently neither scared nor hostile. Meanwhile I half filled a pail with blueberries, plucking leaves and fruit, without more than turning round. I took them down to the lake and filled up my bucket with water at 45° F., letting the leaves float out. Good for breakfast are the berries, with the chill on them. I took a few trout, and after supper and making camp I wandered down the shore. The moon was a huge red pearl flashing a long track of ruddy color to my feet. I sat down in a druidical temple, the weary work of wave and storm through countless ages. Vast columns upheld the stone roof, on which tall trees were growing. I lit my pipe and lay quiet. Now and then rose and fell strange noises from the wood-people somewhere behind me. The long, wild tremolo of the loons shook across the lake as they sailed shoreward, lured by the red glow of my camp-fire. How I wished you all were with me, for, indeed, I am at my best here. You would—'"

Here Mrs. Vincent ceased reading. "The rest," she said, "is personal. Oh, Fred, do take me there next summer."

"Certainly, my dear, and as you want to see Xerxes, we will ask him, and as you are planning a country house, we will build there."

We laughed. Mrs. Vincent said he was unpardonably disagreeable, and I asked if I might see the letter. After glancing over it I said: "There seems no reason why Miss Norreys should not know more of our friend."

Mrs. Vincent said: "If you wish," and I read aloud:

"'Here, dear, undeserved friend, you would forget all my naughty ways. Here is no material possibility of weakness or wickedness; not a woman, not a man—not one. How that simplifies life! The devil could not be bad here. What commandment could he break? You will say he can bear false witness, but who is his neighbor? The bears don't care. He cannot lie. But there is no commandment as to that, and, at all events, no one to lie to. Envy, hatred, and malice require objects. The bear is my only neighbor. We are on terms of amity and divide the berries. In a word, this is Eden before Eve came and tempted that innocent snake to tempt her in turn, as a poet has once said.

"'Dear love to all. Here I am *Saint* Clair.'"

"The hermits understood how to manufacture inevitable virtue," said Vincent.

My wife, laughing, quoted:

> "Such was that happy garden state
> While man there walked without a mate:
> After a place so pure and sweet,
> What other help could yet be meet?
> But 't was beyond a mortal's share
> To wander solitary there.
> Two paradises are in one
> To live in paradise alone."

It was aptly quoted, and I said so with a nod. Then, returning to the letter, I came upon a postscript: "'Xerxes has been given a degree by Cucumber College. Imagine Xerxes LL.D. I do not quite recall the real name of the college. It is a bisexual

university, I think. L.S.D. were a better degree, but the joke is no good on this side the seas. I think of sending it to "Punch."'

"How like him!" I said, returning the letter to Mrs. Vincent.

"And now I must go," said Miss Norreys.

"One moment," said Mrs. Vincent. "This is so like him—a second postscript: 'I have seen the most beautiful woman. It was at Muskrat Bay. Her husband is a German. He advertised for a wife, and got this glorious creature. It is such a pretty story. We sat on a log and smoked pipes while he told me all about it. I keep it for you, dear lover of tales. V. St. C.'"

XVI

IT was ripe October before we were again at home. Sibyl was better. Now and then, for days, she fell into silent moods, but, although visibly paler, she did her lessened work to Clayborne's satisfaction. St. Clair, still wandering, wrote at intervals; and for the rest of us life went on as usual. I was at work; my wife was busy with wonderful plans for keeping women what they are and making them all that they are not. Clayborne was writing his book on the Mohammedan sects, and happy over a promising lawsuit concerning an irredeemable ground-rent.

I was sorry and glad that St. Clair was absent; glad for Sibyl's sake, and sorry for our own. When I was tired and worried I missed his persistent cheerfulness: it was more than that; it was joyousness which forgot failures, weaknesses, and worse things, and was unassailable, communicable and elevative.

Late in November we were again to dine with Clayborne. My wife having an engagement elsewhere, I went alone and by an earlier train, in order to see Clayborne and talk with him undisturbed.

I said to him, "Let us see the vase," and, he assenting, we walked through a woodland to the south of the Italian garden. The ground was covered with fallen leaves, in that chance mingled variety which

makes so beautiful the autumn carpet of earth. A few remaining leaves, falling, one by one, through the still air, fluttered to and fro, as if reluctant. Here, before us, lay a little open space surrounded by ancient chestnut-trees. From underneath a rock of gray lichen-tinted stone rose a copious spring, and, forming a small pool, flowed thence down the hill. Upon the rock, amid ferns and above the spring-head, stood the white wonder of St. Clair's vase. The pedestal was absent. I recognized the taste which had decided not to use it here, and asked where it was. St. Clair had said he would keep it, but it was like the man to forget.

Clayborne replied: "About the house somewhere. Sibyl would not have it, and chose this place for the vase. She was so decisive as to the pedestal that I gave way. The proper place for the vase is the hall or the garden."

"No, no," said I; "she was right. Here the vase will soon look old and become tinted and leaf-stained."

"So said Sibyl. I indulged her, of course; but now she comes here in this chilly autumn weather, and reads or sews. You sentimental people are droll folks to me. Sibyl has caught it, like a disease. I think it is partly the fault of St. Clair. She used to be shy about expressing her sentimentalities. Think of her telling me that, some day at dusk, she would see Keats. He would be smiling with joy to find his dream set in marble. St. Clair says this kind of thing to astonish me; it is half, or wholly, a jest. She says it in an assured way, as you or I might say we expected to meet Vincent at the club."

I said: "Yes, Sibyl is a peculiar person, Clayborne. She is intellectual, impressible, full of sentiment. The mind is used to feed emotions which it should set aside or control. Her will-power is less than that which is normal to a woman as able as Sibyl; I mean it is so just now; but much of her present state depends on her health."

"Her health?" Clayborne was always surprised when any one he knew became ill.

"Yes," I said. "Cannot you see that she is growing gradually paler? I do not like her condition. She must give up all your work and be idle for a while; and as for other matters, I will see to them."

"I wish you would see her now," he returned hastily. "She is lying down in her room. Of late she always does lie down before dinner."

I said, "Very good," and we went to the house. On my knocking and naming myself, she said, "Come in." She was now one of the household, and had two apartments. One was a small sitting-room, with many books, a bird-cage, and a piano. Here I found her lying on a lounge. In the bow-window overlooking the garden stood the pedestal. It was covered by a piece of some stuff, and was really concealed except for a white corner, which caught my eye and told me at once what it was. It has been said that the physician should see, hear, hide, and bide. The art of observing and not attracting the attention of the observed is a fine art. There are men who see things, but are as obviously observant as Paul Pry. When, my talk being over, I rose, Sibyl said to me: "I will do as you say. I see the need

for rest and care. But there is still a thing which disturbs me more than all my weakness. It is that at times I find I have forgotten the having done something, which later I perceive to have been done—I mean, of course, by me."

"As what?" I asked.

"Yesterday I made a pen-wiper. Since making it I have written no letters. To-day it is blackened. I must have used it; no one else could have done so. Last week I twice answered a dinner invitation for Mr. Clayborne. I recall having done so but once."

I reassured her, and told her that, as is common, memory suffers loss of competency when the bodily health is impaired.

"That is very consoling," she said; "and now please to go. I must dress for dinner. I shall be down presently. Mr. St. Clair is in town."

"Yes, he is. But how did you hear of it?"

"Some one must have told me."

"But who, Sibyl?"

"I do not remember."

"He has been in town for some days," said I. "But you know that he might have been there longer, and no one the wiser. Mr. Le Clerc told me he had met him. I, at least, supposed him still absent. Imagine a friend who, after being absent for months, can, on his return, stay away from you as he does."

"He is in the house now."

"Indeed! That may be," and so saying I went away.

As I set foot in the hall, St. Clair welcomed me joyously.

"Where have you been?" I said.

"I knew you would scold. I have never left the studio for a week. I saw in Wyoming—"

"A woman?"

"No, no. A king grizzly, the grandfather of Xerxes. I had to model him as soon as I came home. How is everybody?"

Had Sibyl heard his voice, consciously heard it, or had she unconsciously heard it? Hysterical women have in rare cases abnormal acuteness of hearing.

"And who have you to dine?" I said to our host, dismissing the question for a time.

"Oh, our usual party; Randolph, too, and Thornhill."

"What! the novelist? That is charming of you. I have no end of questions to ask him."

"He is in the city to make some studies for that absurdity, an historical novel. Your questions will have to be few, because Le Clerc has arranged to have Weevils, the thing they call a medium, here at ten."

As he spoke, Thornhill arrived, and began to chat with Mrs. Vincent.

St. Clair, overhearing us, asked: "Who is Weevils, Clayborne?"

"A medium," returned Clayborne. "Le Clerc was to have dined with us."

"So he told me, two days ago. He has fallen out?"

"Yes," said our host; "I am sorry. I protested a little about this nonsense, but Vincent, who loathes it as I do, asked me to have the fellow here rather than for us to see him elsewhere. Of course I said yes. If Mrs. Vincent wants that, or anything, I remain pleased."

"Jolly name, Weevils," said St. Clair, as Clayborne gave his arm to Mrs. Vincent.

"Raps or voice?" said I.

"Voice," said Clayborne.

"Randolph," said I, "have you any belief in this stuff?"

"How can you ask me? It is a tangle of fraud, delusion, and self-deceit."

I was glad that my wife was absent. She has a mild tendency to coquet with the mystical. I saw pass over Vincent's sensitive face a shadow-like cloud of annoyance when Clayborne mentioned Weevils. But he was very gentle as to Anne Vincent's follies. They were rare and of brief duration.

As we took our seats, I said: "Watkins, the mathematician, was carried away by these fools."

"And yet there are few more able men," remarked Randolph; "but a man may possess such an intellect as to give him success in physics, or chemistry, or law, and yet be curiously incapable of dealing with the vague, the incomplete, with apparent facts which cannot be analytically questioned, facts which cannot be conditioned and thus cross-examined. In the physical world we do not have these difficulties."

"I have been," said I, "through a multitude of these experiences and have come out of all with disgust and disbelief. But I have still an open mind." Here, turning to Vincent, I said that I would send Mrs. Vincent the report of the Seybert Commission on so-called spiritualism. I had promised to do so and quite forgotten it. Vincent nodded to me approvingly.

"It is full of nourishment for laughter," said St. Clair. "Read the story of the skull."

"The skull?" said Thornhill.

"Yes," I said. "I gave to my friend H—— F——, the Shakespeare scholar, the skull used as Yorick's by all the great actors who have happened to play here the part of Hamlet. It is covered with their autographs. It is, in fact, a negro man's cranium. We asked by letter three mediums to communicate with the spirit owner of the skull. According to one, it proved to be a French lady, if I remember correctly, of light character, and who else I forget. It was immense fun, I assure you. I will not ruin the character of a good story by telling it too briefly. Read it."

"But," said Mrs. Vincent, "do not many honest believers in this spirit business admit that it is often fraudulently used?"

"Yes. But read this report and remember that here were a number of unusually competent men for years investigating these matters, and unable at last to say they had seen anything inexplicable to them or which the conjurer could not repeat. Meanwhile, as a physician, I should say that I have seen this folly give rise to ruin of households and to some insanity."

"So may religion," said Thornhill.

"But the one is needed, the other is useless; and really I have seen so many clever men taken in that I begin to believe few are so prepared as to be competent students of a subject as elusively difficult as this. I saw one of the greatest of my profession in Europe completely deluded by an hysterical girl. I

showed him how it was done, and he was simply annoyed, and by no means grateful."

With this the talk ceased to be generally heard, and St. Clair, beside me, said: "Vincent does not like this medium business."

"No. He has with difficulty kept Mrs. Vincent out of it. Le Clerc is, of course, ignorant of this. Clayborne ought to have seen that Miss Maywood is of all persons most unfit to subject to the emotions these people may stir up."

"It is too late to do anything now," said St. Clair.

"It cannot be stopped, but we must only see that it does not go too far. I have had a heavy dose of it and know well how mischievous it may be. I shall call up Faraday and question him on electricity, or invite the spirit of Beethoven to beat musical time to some one playing his sonatas."

St. Clair was silent for a time. At last he said: "That may answer. I must leave at nine. I have to meet Winstone at the club about his child's bas-relief. I shall miss your medium. I am very sorry."

Meanwhile Randolph was talking to Sibyl and Mrs. Vincent, and as it was plainly about this same matter, I broke up the talk by a question to Thornhill across the table. His reply was too interesting not to attract attention.

I said: "I have long desired to ask you something about the historical novel. How do you approach it?"

"To answer you I should have to lecture."

"Why not?" said Clayborne.

"Well, do not let me bore you. Suppose I have a story to tell and wish to evolve character amid the

scenery and events of an historical episode. Suppose, for instance, the story to lie largely in a great city. For years I must study the topography, dress, manners, and family histories; must be able in mind to visit this or that house; know where to call, whom I shall see, the hours of meals, the diet, games, etc. I must know what people say on meeting and parting. Then I must read letters, diaries, and so on, to get the speech forms and to enable me, if it be autobiography, to command the written style of the day. Most men who write thus of another time try to give the effect of actuality by an excessive use of archaic forms. Only enough should be used to keep from time to time some touch of this past, and not so much as to distract incessantly by needless reminders. It is an art, and, like all good art effects, it escapes complete analysis.

"Then, as to the use of historical characters. These must naturally influence the fate of your puppets; they must never be themselves the most prominent personages of your story."

"And where," said I, "do you get your characters?"

"It is hard to answer. Usually some person I know is in my mind; although this ideal becomes modified in actual use, or else my character may be unlike any one I can recall; but often, later, I come upon a person like it. Character is best delineated by occasional broad touches, without much explanatory comment, without excess of minute description. If I fail to characterize I fail in novel-writing. It is the main thing; the rest is secondary."

Said Mrs. Vincent: "One thing puzzles me. In some few novels people seem alive. Not only are their actions natural, their words such as are used in actual life, but they become well known to us. We might meet them and, to put it strongly, see them without astonishment, and find natural and familiar their talk of this or that."

"Yes, that is the highest attainment of our art. How it is done I cannot tell you. If I doubt that a conversation is what I call 'alive,' I read it aloud; then I know. Or if still in doubt, I have it read to me. That is better. Nor can I tell why some men cannot create gentlefolk. It is not knowledge, nor is it the being in or of their world that gives this power. Thackeray had it; so had Trollope; Dickens never; nor, to my mind, was George Eliot always happy in this respect; and of the living I shall say nothing."

"And yet," said Vincent, "in our daily intercourse what is more easy than this—may we call it diagnosis, Owen?"

"But that is not description," said the novelist. "You would find that more difficult."

"My favorite novels," said Mrs. Vincent, "are forever injured by illustrations. I fall a prey to the artist's crude conceptions. When I recall the characters I see them as drawn, not as written."

"True, too true," said St. Clair. "We talked about that, or was it with Mrs. North? How do you explain it?"

"Is it," said I, "because what we see is better remembered and recalled than is the complex ideali-

zation or the mere description of personal appearance?"

"It is so," said Thornhill. "If the artist's pictures do not assist you to see the writer's people as he conceived them, they do not illustrate. I never yet knew an artist who read with sufficient care the thing he was to help us to see."

"You have been very interesting," said Mrs. Vincent.

Sibyl, who had been silently listening, said: "I should like to give an artist the outline of a story and let him try to tell it only by pictures."

"The man does not live who could do it," said St. Clair.

Said Vincent: "I am still dissatisfied as to one of your answers. Do you content yourself with the common experiences of life, or do you go afield in search of incidents?"

"The newspapers help me, and I am apt to wander in the slums and to talk in trains with working-people. I remember one curious experience, but"—and he paused—"it is too long, and I have had the floor all through dinner."

"We can stand more," said Clayborne, "and meanwhile I can contribute a pretty little fact which fell in my way in Spain. We were looking at the porches of that dismal palace, the Escorial. The guide pointed out a vast picture of Lepanto. Here were Don John and this and that grandee. I asked where was Don Cervantes. He said he was not there, and that he, the guide, had never heard of him. I had the wit to ask if Don Quixote were there. To this

he said most likely he was, but that he had not been long a guide. He would ask which was Don Quixote."

"Then," said Thornhill, "the author was dead, so to speak; the creation of his brain lived on."

As Thornhill concluded Clayborne rose and said:

"Let us have our tobacco in the library. We can hear the rest there."

We followed him, and St. Clair excused himself and left us. When we were seated in the library, Thornhill, being reminded of his promise, went on: "I was, many years ago, walking down the Bowery one afternoon, when I saw on a door 'Professor of Tattooing. Tattooing in all Colors. Oriental and Indian Styles. Third Floor.' This so attracted me that I went upstairs and knocked at the door on which I found the professor's name. It was opened by a small, fat Hindoo. He was clad in white, spotless linen. He was of a beauty I may fitly call singular. The skin was a clear brown, his eyes large and like great garnets, his mouth and nose of faultless form, and the dominant expression watchful and sensual. He spoke very fair English, and had the sleek, soft manner of the Orient. I said I came to talk business, and that, having been in India, I was interested to find that he was a native of the East. 'Might I ask,' said I, 'where the professor was born?' 'In Cawnpore.' Then he added quietly, 'You are not English?' 'No; American. Why do you ask?' 'Because my father was degraded by being made to lick the floor where blood was, and then hanged. It was at Cawnpore in what they call the mutiny.' I said it

was sad, and felt no doubt that the father of this fat fellow well deserved his fate. 'You can tattoo?' I asked. 'Yes. Look.' And he showed me two fat arms which were wonderfully covered with strange devices, not all of them such as my taste approved. 'Will the sahib see my book?' I saw his book. I prefer not to say more. 'Ha! You do not want these. They please you not.' I said that was of no moment. 'Let us get to business.' Just then, as we were seated, one of his fat and very clean hands rested on the table. With the other he patted it and smoothed it as one does a pet cat; meanwhile he looked at me steadily. I said, 'Why do you do that?' It got on to my nerves, as people say, and as no doubt it was meant to do. He smiled the slow smile of the fat of face, in whom the mirth-signal is difficult of display. I began to see that I was meant to be impressed, for he was long in answering. 'That is my evil hand,' he said. 'The bad thought goes there. I trust it not. With that hand I strike; with this I give alms.' 'Nonsense,' I said. 'When I strike I do not talk.' 'Nor I, sahib, when I strike. It is business. And what,' said he, 'can I do for you?' I replied: 'Suppose I want you to tattoo initials and a date on a child?' 'Good. But why?' 'Oh, the child may be lost, and it may be desirable years hence to identify it.' 'For ornament,' he said, 'I have my terms; for other affairs—well, special terms. I must have one hundred dollars.' 'Good,' said I. 'Shall I bring the child here to-night?' 'Yes, at nine.' Now, as I had only begun my researches, I desired to hear more of my man. I said: 'Here are ten dollars.' He replied:

'The sahib is generous and honored.' He no doubt meant honorable. 'You must have had some interesting experiences?' 'Yes. I learned to tattoo in Japan. There it is an art.' 'I do not mean to discuss the art,' I returned. 'I am curious, that is all. If I commit myself, as I may do to-night, I shall want to feel sure. You must have had some queer adventures—in your business, I mean.' 'Oh, many, many adventure,' and again the lazy smile crawled about his face. 'Such as?' said I. 'Oh, when your great war broke out many men came to have names and company and regiment and where they lived tattooed on their arms. It was good business. To some it was of use, I did hear.' 'Do the police trouble you?' 'No; why should they? I am careful. Once a man would have me tattoo him, and he would bring another, and would I mix what he would give me with my pigments? He would pay five hundred dollars. I said yes, but I only made believe to use it, and that man he came nevermore, but his five hundred dollars, it remains. I tattoo then my neighbor's cat with his stuff, and that cat no more disturbs my rest. Once I have a trouble, not much. A man he paid me to go to a house to tattoo. There was a fine room and a woman asleep, she and a baby of a year. I saw no servant, although the house was great; and there were pictures and rugs, fine rugs. I know about rugs. It was twelve of night. When I saw the woman she was in bed asleep, and the child. I lift her lid and see. Then I say to that man, "She has taken of opium." I take it myself and I know. He say, "Yes. She will not feel till morning." When

I was come to this I say, "Too cheap"; and he, he say, "Here will be double." I did not like it, but I used my left hand only. Ha! it was a small thing I did it and came away. Next day I see in the paper that the man of that house shoot himself, and the woman, his wife, have disappeared, child and all. I was seen to come out alone, and there was some talk of murder. But it was foolish, and soon I was let go. What crime to tattoo a lady? No one knew, and the man was dead. I tattoo many lady.' 'But, professor, what did you tattoo on them?'" Here Thornhill hesitated a moment and seemed a little confused. Then he added: "What the man wanted put on the mother was an X on the forehead, and on the child a Y. 'Very stupid,' said my Hindoo. 'What it did mean I know not.' I said nothing except that it was a queer story, and was it at nine I was to bring the baby? 'At nine, sahib.' Then I came away, sorry not to have a longer talk with this rascal."

Chancing to meet the novelist a few days later, I said: "You puzzled me about those letters, X and Y, which your Hindoo tattooed on mother and child. I cannot see any meaning in it."

"Ah," he replied, laughing, "I began to tell a story, as one sometimes does, unmindful that the closing part might not be altogether—well, suitable. The real ending of the story was different, but, suddenly remembering Miss Maywood's presence, I changed the letters. What the rascal put on the mother was A, on the child B."

"I see, of course. How atrocious! What strange ingenuity of revenge!"

When Thornhill ceased we began to make comments.

"An X and a Y," said Mrs. Vincent. "What a singular tale!"

"Yes. Is n't it a strange story?" said Sibyl.

"Oddly enough, I can continue the tale," said I. "A brother M.D., a surgeon who has not our ideas as to the impropriety of mentioning facts as to patients, once told me that he had long ago removed letters tattooed on a woman and child. He refused to say what letters, but these must have been your Hindoo's patients. What a remarkable coincidence that we two, who alone know the two ends of this story, should chance to meet!"

"Suppose," said Vincent, "the lady to have been a woman of our class,—and, God knows, she may well have been,—and have happened to dine here to-night."

"Yes, it might have been," said I. "It reminds me of something as serious. Major P—— was in charge during the war of the spy department of the army. He had twice occasion to meet a woman who was in our pay and who was in one of the Confederate departments as a clerk, and known by name to him alone. Years after he arrived late at a dinner in Newport, and hastily offered his arm to the woman assigned to him. It was the spy. She grew pale. He whispered: 'Take care. You are safe.' You may imagine them to have had an agreeable meal. She was a woman of the highest social class, and, as I said, employed during the war in one of the Rebel departments."

Said Vincent: "I can contribute a pleasanter coincidence. I was one day talking at lunch to my wife of parodies. I said: 'I have lost my copy of "Milkanwatha,"' the finest of all parodies. At least, so said our friend Mrs. K——. It was out of print. I added: 'If ever I see the Reverend George Strong, who wrote it, I shall ask for a copy. I have not seen him in seven years.' At this moment the servant brought me a card. It was that of the author of 'Milkanwatha.'"

"And did you get a copy?" said Sibyl. "May I not see it?"

"I did get it, and you shall see it," said I.

At this moment came the butler. "Mr. Weevils is in the drawing-room, sir. The windows is all shut, and the curtains over the doors, accordin' as ordered, sir."

"Now," said our host, "we are to enter without noise, and find our ways to the table as we can. His letter was very exact. I have agreed to all the fellow's terms. Once seated, he will direct us what to do."

"How delightful!" said Mrs. Vincent. "Come, Sibyl, we must sit together. I wish St. Clair were here."

We were about to encounter something confidently asserted to be outside of the boundaries of our everyday experiences. For once we were to pass the limits of common human knowledge and hear voices or sounds from the unseen world. I had been through it many times, but always with a little anticipative sense of what it were misuse of the word to call awe.

It was now plainly discernible on the faces of the people who followed Mrs. Vincent and Sibyl as they passed out of the lighted hall through the curtained doorway into entire darkness, there to find, as they might, seats around a large table. I groped about, and at last discovered myself to be next to Sibyl. Who were next to the medium, Mr. Weevils, I do not remember, although we talked it all over the week after. I think he sat at one end of the table, with no one very close to him. We were in perfect darkness. We remained thus at least five minutes. Then we were told by a voice, low and rather feminine, to grasp the hands of our neighbors. I found Sibyl's and Vincent's. Who, if any, touched those of the medium I do not know. The gloom, the silence, the attention, expectant of none knew what, were admirable preparations for an introduction to the citizens of another sphere of being. I was speculating as to what Mr. Weevils might look like, when I heard the most singular voice. It was small, thin, and hesitative, with something of the quality of a child's voice. It said: "The conditions are good to-night. We shall be favored, I am sure. Ah, I am feeling it. Do not be alarmed. I may suffer. I may become rigid. Do not move. It will go. It will pass. And then our friends will be with us." With this the table shook, we heard groans, and at last a long sigh. "It is over. She is here. What will you of her? Speak."

Those present were plainly not prepared with interrogative wisdom. There was silence. At last I said: "Who are you?"

After a pause I was answered by a high-pitched

female voice distinctly of Boston, and clearly that of a woman. I should have judged her to be past middle life. Weevils was evidently a first-rate artist. The voice said: "I am Euphemia Briars. My friends call me Phemie. What is it you want?"

I said: "My friend Mr. Clayborne is writing a commentary on Kant. Is Kant here?"

There was a brief silence, and then: "He is here. What do you want? He is difficult. He is a negative spirit."

"Naturally," murmured Vincent.

"Herr Kant," said Clayborne, "is consciousness a unit or is it ever doubled?"

Said the voice: "Personal consciousness is a fraction of the perceptivity of the world-soul."

"By George!" exclaimed Clayborne, while Sibyl shook with irreverent mirth.

"Would Herr Kant kindly explain," said Clayborne, "what is consciousness?"

A brief pause followed, and then: "Consciousness is the interpreter of the objective to the subjective. It is the eye and ear of the ego."

"It must have long ears," growled Clayborne, "or at least Kant has. That is enough for me."

Said Randolph: "Herr Kant, is the devil a pessimist?"

"There are many devils. They are all naturally optimists by desire and pessimists by experience, but their theory as to the desirable is not yours, for how can those who are at the worst be pessimists?"

I began to perceive that we had to deal with a somewhat unusual performer. Then I heard Sibyl

say, in her low, clear tones: "You know both worlds, Herr Kant. Is it worth while in this sphere to struggle with one's temptations?"

I was a little surprised at the question, but no one could anticipate what Sibyl might say.

The voice changed and became stern. "Make thyself strong against temptations in thy own world, that thou mayest be strong to resist those of this other world, for here the angels also are tempted, and for ever and ever rise on strengthened wings through eternities of struggle. For that thou art here."

"I am answered," said Sibyl, and, in my ear: "I was answered beforehand."

After this there was a long silence. Then I asked: "Why do we never hear any novel idea from the spirit world?"

"Because," said an odd falsetto voice, "we are in eternity. Novelty involves the time relation, and therefore cannot exist here."

"It must be dull," murmured Sibyl, as a squeaky voice was heard in very good German, which I translate:

"Is Herr von Clayborne here?"

"He is," said our host. "The more fool he. Who are you?"

"I am Hegel. Why do you write foolish books as to the sects of the Mohammedans? You know nothing. Herr Schweinhausen is right."

This was more than we could stand. A titter went round in the gloom as I translated for Sibyl.

Clayborne said: "What idiotic nonsense! We have had enough of it."

"No, no," said Mrs. Vincent; "not yet. Will the spirit of the first lady we interviewed tell me what is considered in the other world the true religion?"

The high-pitched voice replied: "We had thirty-seven new religions when I left Boston, and several fractional ones coming on. In this other world are no religions, but much religion. Herr Kant is angry because he had so brief an interview with Herr von Clayborne. He says Herr von Clayborne's double is annoyed at the indefiniteness of Herr von Clayborne's mind."

This was charming.

"My double? Indefinite? Good gracious!"

"Yes. Souls are created double; one remains in the spheres, one is born to earth. When the spheral spirit visits the earthly double he becomes what psychologists call the subliminal consciousness. He gives his earthly double gleams of celestial wisdom. He says Herr von Clayborne should have been a poet —that he has too much imagination for a historian."

"Delightful!" cried Mrs. Vincent.

There was noise of suppressed mirth in the darkness.

"How shall we know the truth of all this?"

"Shall I tell you some of your secret thoughts?"

"Well, why not?"

"You overdrew your bank-account last week."

"Good gracious! I did."

"You told a man named Clair, in a letter, that he was a fool. He wrote you about some anonymous letters. You said, 'Burn them.'"

"That will do," said Mrs. Vincent, rather faintly.

"You are impertinent. I do not desire to hear any more."

"Is there a man named Vincent here—a little man with tall manners and an eye-glass?"

"Oh, stuff!" said Vincent, rising. I heard his chair move as he pushed it back. Clayborne threw open a window. The medium was gone. He had slipped out quietly and, as we learned, left the house unseen of any one.

We went back to the library—Clayborne growling out anathemas, Vincent laughing, his wife silent.

"Well," said Randolph, as we sat down, "that is certainly my queerest experience in this line."

"You should be satisfied, Anne," said Vincent.

"Not entirely. It is quite inexplicable. I wanted to ask him so many more things."

"I think this may suffice."

Said Sibyl: "They do not appear to have improved upon us in the world of spirits."

"Ah!" said Randolph. "I like what my friend W—— said of it. Dr. Q—— assured him that one of the advantages of the spheres lay in the fact that if a spirit desired to indulge in naughtiness, as, for instance, if he inclined to get drunk, he had only to enter the soul of some one on earth, possess that man with the appetite for whisky, and thus enjoy the consequent frolic, and so depart. 'But,' said W——, 'my dear sir, you tell me justice reigns supreme in the spirit world.' 'That is true.' 'Then is it not sad that the unlucky contributor to the happiness of his temporary spiritual lodger should be left next morning with a headache for two?'"

"What said the doctor?" I queried.

"Of course we do not know what the doctor said. All the wit in the world lacks sequels."

"I hope," said Sibyl, "my double will always stay away."

"Oh, yes," cried Mrs. Vincent. "To keep a free bodily boarding-house for spirits who may make you do things which will bring the police down on you. Good gracious!"

"It accounts for St. Clair," said I. "He may have a score of doubles. And did you really overdraw your account? and did he write you about anonymous letters?"

"Yes. That does seem strange, because he did not wish me to mention the letters. Now, Fred, is it not really strange?" she added, turning to Vincent.

"Yes; and unwholesome and useless and impertinent."

"And wicked," said Sibyl. "As if nonsense like this were needed to strengthen our belief in a world beyond our own."

"Come, Anne," said Vincent, rising. "Thank you, Clayborne. Good night, Randolph."

"Mr. Thornhill," said I, "you must dine with us. Will Tuesday suit you? Yes? Then at eight, please."

On the day named Thornhill dined alone with us, as I found it impossible to gather at short notice the guests I desired. The talk ranged widely, the novelist speaking with envy of the physician's opportunity of seeing character as we see it. I in turn discussed the doctor and patient as used in fiction, and amused Thornhill and my wife by my critical comments. We

united in regret as to there being so little delineation of the doctor in Shakespeare.

"And yet," I said, "nothing in all Shakespeare is as natural as the doctor in 'Macbeth.'"

"Was the queen as natural?" said Thornhill.

"We should have asked Shakespeare last week, at the séance."

We laughed heartily at the remembrance.

"I was about to add," Thornhill said, "that the preceding talk of the doctor, in Scene III, about the cure of scrofula, seems to have in it nothing relative."

"No," I said; "unless it were meant as a mere tribute to royalty, I see no reason for it. The fact that the queen was seen washing her hands for a quarter of an hour at a time is very interesting. Was it in the day that this was to be seen, or only at night? If in the day, it implies a disordered mind, something more than—shall I say?—normal remorse, a possession akin to insanity. I cannot even mildly match in my professional memory the night-walking horror. I have often meant to ask some prison warden if murderers ever speak of their crimes in their sleep, or dream of them."

"What a tempting subject!" said the novelist. "But pray explain more fully what you mean by the hand-washing as the indication of insanity."

"I mean this. There is a form of mental disorder marked by a never-ending sense of being unclean. If let alone, these people bathe repeatedly and wash their hands many times a day, and feel that they are continually being contaminated. This disease takes many forms and is very lasting. I have only spoken

of so much of it as has relation to the case of Lady Macbeth."

"It is interesting," said my wife. "I never before heard it mentioned."

"But," asked Thornhill, "in the instances seen by you was there, as in this example, a cause? What starts so strange a habit?"

"We are rarely able to trace it to a distinct emotion. Occasionally some woman attributes the trouble to something done or seen, which she dwells upon until it develops into what we call the mania of impurity. That is all I can say without talking too much medicine."

"Then let us change the subject," said my wife. "I want, Mr. Thornhill, to ask you a rather personal question."

"I am at your service," said the novelist.

"I understand a man's writing many books, but not how he comes to write the first one—a novel, I mean."

"I see," said Thornhill. "Nowadays men usually begin as writers of short tales. A distinct art, by the way. In older times no one began thus."

"Yes, Cervantes did," said I.

"No; that was, I think, after he wrote 'Don Quixote,' and very pretty those stories are. Scott began with a novel, unless the poems count as tales; and you know Dickens."

"I think you are correct; but how did you begin?"

Thornhill laughed. "That is a queer story. I was a reporter on the 'Moon,' a mild weekly. One day I saw in it an advertisement: 'Wanted, a plot for a

novel.' The idea struck me as a fertile one. I sent the sketch of a plot, and, to my surprise, received ten dollars. Then I advertised: 'Plots furnished for tales and novels,' and gave as reference the editor. What became of my plots I do not know. Not all tales see the light of print. I made a quite comfortable addition to my meager income. At last one of my clients wrote that she could make plots easily enough, but wanted to pay me liberally to take a plot of her own and give a full scenario, as the playwrights call it. Her plot was good. I fell in with her wish, gave her characters, sketched situations, noted hints as to talk, and so on. She returned the manuscript with a very fair check, and wrote frankly that she had tried to make a story and had failed. I in turn wrote my thanks. There was a pretty exchange of letters. She is now Mrs. Thornhill, and if you ever tell her—well, I will put you in a book."

We swore eternal secrecy. The lady was an heiress with literary aspirations.

"Then you wrote a novel?" said my wife.

"Yes; I asked leave to use her plot, and that was the way I began to inflict myself upon an indulgent public."

My wife rose. "I shall now retire and write a novel. I leave you to your cigars. Good night. I am sorry I cannot give you your tea myself. I am going to a little dance at Mrs. Vincent's."

XVII

THE next morning I was in my library, when St. Clair entered.

"Have you a few minutes to spare?" he said.

This was an unusual question for St. Clair to ask. He hated to be interrupted in his own work, but as to whether he disturbed that of others he was quite careless.

"Of course. What is it? How well you look! I was sorry you went away that night. We had a famous sitting with Weevils. I confess to having been somewhat mystified."

"Yes. I did it well, Owen."

"Then I saw it all. You scamp!"

"Yes. I chanced to hear of it from Le Clerc, and got Weevils's address from him. I gave the fellow twenty dollars to let me have his cloak and hat and to act in his place. I don't like other folks' hats. I got the full directions, as given beforehand in a note from Weevils to Clayborne. Never had such fun in my life. It will cure Anne Vincent."

"Will you tell her?"

"Of course, and all of them; only let me do it in my own way, Owen, or I shall catch it. You know how Vincent abhors practical jokes."

"I think you had better go to Kamchatka and write thence. You will never be forgiven."

"Yes, I shall. You have all had so much practice in forgiving me that forgiveness has acquired the force of instinct."

"Well, perhaps. I shall hold my tongue. It was splendidly done. What was that about anonymous letters, may I ask?"

"I came to speak to you of them. Few things trouble me; these have done so. I wrote Mrs. Vincent to that effect, but said little more—nothing of their contents, nothing of moment. She told me in reply that I was a fool, and to burn them. The fact is, Owen, if it were not for me Mrs. Vincent would be an unendurably amiable woman. I keep her temper sharpened. Why she did not see through my trick I cannot understand."

"Probably she was right as to your letters, Victor. But why were you troubled?"

"You will understand when you have seen the letters. Read them. Let your wife read them. There they are. Then we can talk it over."

With some hesitation I took the letters, and when St. Clair had gone, read them carefully, and, like St. Clair, but for reasons of my own, was shocked. That evening late I said to my wife: "Put aside your book and don't sew. I want, as you say, a little undivided attention."

"Certainly, Owen; nothing serious, I hope."

"No and yes. St. Clair has been receiving, while away, letters—four in all—anonymous. I have them here. He is troubled about them, and has asked you and me to consider them."

"And why? Few things trouble him. I should think there was but one course open—burn them."

"That is not the question. It is far more grave."

"If I may go on with my embroidering, Owen, I shall be far wiser counsel. How you men get on without using your hands I cannot comprehend."

"Nor I. But listen. We will talk over the matter after you have heard me read the letters. They are type-written and are not signed."

"This sounds interesting, Owen. Now I have my work I am ready. I suppose anonymous letters are always meant to injure by false or by true statements."

"No," I replied, "not always. Thornhill says he has had in his life many unsigned letters about his books, some ill-natured, some lavish of praise. These letters before us leave the way to detection open, invite comment and reply."

"And why, then, in any sense anonymous, Owen?"

"They are not signed."

"But, Owen, most of the critical people who write in journals would be probably quite as unknown if they added real names as if they added none. As to malicious letters, meant to make mischief and to say what the writer would fear to say openly, that is plain, or rather, I should say, the motive of these is plain, but as to others—"

"They are often explicable," I said. "Some modest woman is taken with desire to criticize your book, or to say it had helped her, and is ashamed to add her name."

"Yes, that also I can comprehend."

"Many others," I went on to say, "are produced

by the craving for confession; not that the writers desire advice or to find rest in the decisions of experience, but purely for the satisfaction of emptying a burdened mind. If you ask me to explain why this gives some form of ease, I cannot answer you."

"Wait a moment, Owen." And as she spoke she went to a bookcase, and opening a book, read:

> "You say to speak, confess, let loose
> To man our hurt, lacks reason's use.
> God hears; why speak? A straw you toss
> To one who drowns; yet from the cross
> Fell on the reeling world below
> Some words of overmastering woe."

"Yes, that was truly said," I returned; "but behind this tendency to speak out, to confess, must lie some explanatory group of human instincts. Its sternest illustration is in the murderer. Despite the known consequences, and quite apart from repentant feelings or any form of remorse, he is ceaselessly urged from within to relate what he has done. Men are gregarious. The common mind abhors solitude. The lonely horror of crime becomes unendurable."

"But why is there relief in confession, Owen?"

"I do not know, and yet I have thought much about it. Finally, my dear, a word about anonymous love-letters. The same human instinct lies behind these, the joy of confession without the shame. 'He will see it, he will read it, he will never know, he will imagine me beautiful, charming, and, alas! I am not!'"

"You are a dangerous man, Owen."

"This is all obvious, Alice. You and I can readily imagine the charm of such a correspondence in which the woman may never be known by name, never seen. 'Let us love one another on paper. We shall never meet.' Such correspondences have been."

"I can appreciate their attractiveness," she said. "One would feel so free to write one's thoughts."

"I know a case in point," I said. "A well-known man received a witty and very amusing anonymous letter. He replied as requested. The letters came and went for years. Often those of the woman were in terms of warm affection. An accident revealed her identity. She was a woman double the man's age—in fact, an old lady. No doubt she enjoyed the game. She never knew that the man had finally learned who and what she was. He ceased to write, and was a great deal disturbed by the anti-climax."

"I think," said Alice, "he was properly punished."

"Perhaps; but we have wandered from the matter in hand."

"No. You have prepared me to be charitable. Let me add that there ought to be very strong reasons for allowing these letters to be read by you, by us."

"There are. They have disturbed a man not easily troubled."

"Well, go on. A type-written love-letter seems to me—but no matter. Read it to me, please."

"'You will be annoyed to receive this letter, and yet who knows better than you do the charm of addressing a man or woman you will never see on

earth? You will think me immodest if I say, "Read my letter," and yet this is practically what you say when you print a poem; and you did this for years over a name not your own. Shall no one assume a like privilege with you? When you wrote your series of love-poems, they went straight to many hearts; and now here is one who ventures to make reply. If I, who have seen you and read every line you have written, if I—ah, do not dare to smile—if I love you, where is the harm? We shall not ever meet. You are a spirit to me, as much outside my world as if you were dead. What, then, you will ask, is the good? For you, none. Be kind to me in thought. Imagine me poor, lonely, often in the society of your best and noblest words. I can bear it no longer, and must speak to you directly, as I am now doing. What good will it do me? Ah! you a poet, and know not the joys of confession? Consider mine as though it were the revelation of a dream; and thus without shame I can say I love you. I do not ask you to write to me. In some other world we shall meet, and I may say, "It was I." I may never write again. I may write to-morrow. You are mine because you are that in the higher sense. I have selected your best for company. If there is in your daily life what might please me less, I shall not know it. Let me live a little in your life on this same plane of partial knowledge; that much of you mine, this much of me yours.

"'Thy ever friend.

"'P.S. Address, "Friend, General P. O."'"

"Owen, Owen," said Alice, "I should never, never have shown that letter. It is very tender, and to me very sad."

"Suspend judgment, dear, as to the propriety of our seeing it until I have done."

"He did not answer it? Owen, I am afraid I could not have resisted. I hope he did not."

"He was wise for once, and he is not always wise. Here is the second letter."

"Wait, Owen. She who wrote it is young."

"Probably."

"Unhappy?"

"Or thinks she is. I am not sure."

"Go on."

"It begins oddly. Listen, Alice:

"'To you, friend of my vision, long and cheerful years. To you, for whom I wish this and every other good, I write again. You did not answer me. I am glad you did not. I should have hated you had you done so. Life sits lighter since I won the courage of the pen. Are you a trifle curious as to this silly fool? You adore beauty. I am beautiful; and you shall see me in spirit only. Thus shall I be the more beautiful, because imagination will lend her artful aid. All this I may with daring say, because we shall never meet. It remains the guiltless vanity of a dream. I shall appear to your spirit with the radiant loveliness of immaterial conceptions.

"'Ah, the sweet foolishness of love! I lay on the grass yesterday and surrendered myself to the easy prosperity of day-dreams. My sleep dreams are often sad. We were in a boat on a swift river.

You had the helm. I lay facing you. Vast cliffs, tree-crowned, hung over us. The waters leaped in great curves across hidden rocks; voices of hope and voices of fear called to us from the watery turmoil; sweet confusions of the stream, as of memories of long ago, songs by dead lovers sung, fading, and heard again. At last night came, and darkness inconceivable, close, stifling. Yet still we sped on, winged by unseen forces; and now over the quiet of tranquil water we seemed to be flying as through space. Then suddenly you cried, "Behold the day-spring from on high." The sun leaped up, and was born of the night in an instant of time, amid swift-rolling clouds of scarlet and gold; and there about us lay a wonderland of peace and quiet labor and fertile fields. Quickly the river narrowed to where it swept into a deep gorge, under a low arch of dark marble, and behold, it split to right and left, and the boat paused before a palace stair. "Come," you said; and we went in. At last we came to a great bronze door. You said: "Within are all the secrets of life. Within are they who will answer all questions. Art happy? Thou wilt learn why. The day of thy death? Ask. It will be told thee. What is eternity? What is God? Why the earth is?" Then said I, "No, never." And, saying I was wise, you led me forth to a garden, and there you said, "Behold, as the day-spring, so too is the nightfall"; and as at morning, so at evening the sun fell like a great meteor, and it was dark. My strange day-dream, with its impress of reality, was over. I was lying on the grass, unhappy because of the loss of your company. There

came to my mind some lines of a poem, for I felt the sweet touches and the dear homeliness of the grass:

"'Green countenance of earth, forever fair!
Thou lovely smile of the maternal earth,
When, lying in the soft embrace of air,
She feeleth the young spring abound in her,
And laugheth in her bliss, and looketh forth
Amongst the clouds.

"'And such as this is given men to read, and they will not. Perhaps it is well that the idle world leaves the best to the best, and goes its meager way. Here is a silly letter, but again I say, to write it gives me a certain joy, and you must, you will, forgive and not quite forget thy ever friend.'

"One letter," I said, "is quite commonplace, very simple, even childlike. Let us leave that. But here is one other I must read:

"'To you long and cheerful years. Sometimes I sit alone and cry because of having sent these letters. Then a voice from within, the voice of nature, comforts me. I seem to have escaped, in them, into the natural world of the earth's youth, whence I know not. I make mad use of freedom to be myself, to say, "I love you." I hear you ask in scorn, "Why?"

"'Do not thou bewilder love, asking for his reasons.

"'There is your own feather on the fatal dart. Soon or late there is a tragedy in every love. If I should die and lose you! I am sick with the anguish of a giant fear, the fear to lose that which I

have not. Oh, the sweet folly of it all! Love, the magic toy which makes us children all! I see you flush a little. We fence in darkness. I hear. Ah, I have touched you, a pin-point. No, you will never see me. I should die of shame; and yet, I am fair to see, strong and beautiful. No, no! Good night. I shall write no more.'"

"Owen, Owen!" said my wife. "It is sad, pitiful. I am sorry for her, ashamed for her." There were tears in the dear eyes of my Alice.

"Yes, dear," I said, "I understand. Now let us talk. You may look them over before I return them."

"She must be very young; and, Owen, is this last letter quite sane? Was the woman in her right mind?"

"Ah, dear Alice, her right mind! Have we a left mind which is less dexterous? But, not to jest, there are times when certain people are, as we say, not themselves, but another. No woman, unless in a passion of love, could have written a part of the last letter. Better read it yourself."

Alice took the sheets and read it slowly. "Is love ever sane, Owen?" she said, looking up.

"Let us postpone the answer. Have you no idea who wrote these letters, my dear?"

"Not I, Owen."

"Look at the ending, 'Thy ever friend.'"

"Well?"

"And the beginning of the second, 'To you long and cheerful years.'"

"They are certainly rather quaint."

"And, dear Alice, are remembrances of Sir Henry Woton's letters to his nephew."

"Owen! How dreadful! Is it—can it be Sibyl?"

"Yes and no. You saw her in the garden in her trance state, a product of hysteria. She has periods when she does things of which later she has no remembrance. Thus she ordered the pedestal put in her own sitting-room, as the butler told me; and she herself assured me that she found it there and had been surprised. In her sound state she is able to control herself, and has, I think, overcome the impression made by St. Clair's thoughtless admiration of her head and face. In these times of alternate consciousness she obeys her emotional nature; she is even vain of her beauty—is, in fact, no longer our modest Sibyl. This is my conclusion. I may be wrong."

"And what, Owen, can we do? And does Mr. St. Clair know?"

"He does not. But the letters trouble him. He said, if it were some foolish school-girl it would matter little, but these were the letters of no common person."

"You will tell him?"

"I do not think I shall, but I want above all to be sure he does not reply to these letters. The girl is in a state of peril. Her anemia is of a dangerous type, for months better, and then alarming. Let us put it all aside for to-night. I want to send you to bed with something more amusing to think over."

"Indeed, nothing will put it out of my head. I

shall imagine all manner of things. If I am two people, and one can pop up like a jack-in-the-box, I may be six people, and how can I be responsible for the love-affairs of five? Have I six consciences?"

I laughed. "Most folks never see their double, the eccentric boarder. But I promised to amuse you."

"No one can amuse me to-night."

"Listen, then, and believe."

"Well, and what is it?"

"Anne Vincent has told you about Weevils and the séance."

"Yes. She was very much impressed."

"She might well be that. I, too, was puzzled. Our dear scamp St. Clair bribed the medium to let him take his place. You know what a perfect mimic he is. He did it well."

"Owen, Owen! is that so? What a daring joke! I grieve to have missed it. I shall make St. Clair rehearse for me. Will Anne ever forgive him? And Vincent?"

"I think he will if it does anything to cure his wife of her taste for the mysterious."

"Dear Anne! It is only a taste for novel sensations. She wants whatever she has not or cannot have. To this day she wants to see that man Xerxes —she, of all people."

"St. Clair declares that he will tell them all, and he will."

"And he ought to do so, Owen."

"If," said I, "Anne Vincent is in what you call her receptive mood when he confesses, it will go well enough."

"She is very odd about that," said my wife. "If I say, 'Here, Anne, is a delightful poem,' and read it to her, as like as not she may say, 'My dear, it is wretched stuff.' And if she is, as you say, receptive, she is all thanks and delighted like a child."

"May I be there to see?" said I. "I dislike practical jokes as much as Vincent does; but it will be great fun. You should have heard Clayborne interviewing Kant. I think St. Clair will bring it out when we are all together, and thus escape the private tribulation of making his peace with one at a time."

"That would be clever. We dine with Clayborne on Friday week, do we not?"

"Yes. Good night, dear."

"Good night, and don't sit up too late, and don't smoke too much."

"No—as if I ever do."

XVIII

I MADE several attempts to find St. Clair, and at last wrote him a note, to which he made no reply. I had, however, an appointment with him which I knew he would keep; but this was ten days from the date of my talk with Mrs. North. Meanwhile the séance and Mr. Weevils had been much discussed. Clayborne, who had called to pay the medium, told us that Weevils declared himself to be entirely without recollection of what had passed. The comical truth of this amused my wife and St. Clair, who had reënacted the whole comedy for Mrs. North's benefit.

At this time Sibyl, during a temporary absence of Clayborne, was spending a few days in our house. She was in one of her periods of improved health, and, although far from vigorous, was interesting, simple, and natural. That this gentle, modest maid had in her the possibilities disclosed by the letters to St. Clair appeared to my wife almost unbelievable. Our little girl, now five years old, never willingly left Sibyl. Their acquaintance began in an odd way, which I might better have mentioned earlier.

My young lady was observant. Few things escaped her, and she was apt to be frank as to what-

ever excited her interest. When she asked my wife's mother why she put powder on her nose it was simply the statement of a fact observed, and on a level with her announcement that St. Clair had a new necktie. She had yet to learn the useful art of concealing knowledge.

When first she met Miss Maywood, Sibyl was seated on a bench in Mr. Clayborne's garden. I was behind her unnoticed, and was nursing the precious end of a cigar, which, as often happens, had been valuable in aiding that form of conjuring we call thought. I saw my little maid come hesitating across the garden. She saw, but took no notice of me. She picked a flower and came nearer. I was not wanted. Something drew her to Miss Maywood, who, seeing her, laid aside her book and began in turn to inspect my young diplomatist as she made cautious approach. Said Sibyl, "This must be Mary North. Come and pay me a little visit." Sibyl's voice, of which I have already spoken, seemed convincing. My little lady, pausing, said, "I don't know you," and then, "I like you." Sibyl's tact with children was faultless. She did not kiss the child, but made room for her on the bench, saying, "We shall be friends, I know. Did you ever make dandelion chains?" Mary confessed ignorance. Meanwhile Miss Maywood talked pleasant nothings, not insisting on abrupt intimacy, such as wise childhood instinctively dislikes. Meanwhile this small social naturalist was considering her new acquaintance. I listened with interest. She would by and by announce some verdict. At last she said:

"You have long eyelashes, termendously long." The little maid had the vocabulary of a girl of sixteen, and delighted in the use of the big words which she picked up from her elders.

"I must have them cut," said Sibyl, laughing.

"No, you must not. They are lovelly." And then with abruptness, "Why do you have one shoulder so high up, and why do you walk hippety-hop? I saw you."

To have interfered would have been to embarrass Sibyl, as yet unconscious of my presence.

She replied at once: "When I was a little girl like you a careless nurse left me alone, and I had a fall down-stairs, and then I had a bad doctor; and that is why I shall never, never be straight like you."

"I will speak to my papa. He can make anybody well."

"No; only God can make me well."

"Then I will pway God to make you stwaight like my mama."

"He will some day, dear."

"Oh, I am glad of that"; and, to my surprise, the child, who rarely condescended to embrace any one not of her home circle, threw her arms about Sibyl's neck and kissed her. Then she confided to her new friend that mama did say that she, Mary, must sit up straight at table. Miss Maywood also thought it advisable.

"If I am not stwaight I can never, never be mawied. Nurse says so. Can you never be mawied?"

"Never, never."

"I want to be mawied sevewal times."

"Goodness, dear! Why?"

"Because you get pwesents." Then there was a pause.

"I wish I was older, then I would have been at my mama's wedding."

Upon this I broke down, and Sibyl, laughing, rose

Mary said gravely, "I will kiss you once more." It was the solemn seal of an unlimited friendship, and the pair walked away to practise the enticing art of making dandelion chains.

On the Wednesday of my appointment with St. Clair I took Mary with me in my carriage. Her mother was eager to know why I wanted the child so frequently. In fact, St. Clair was making a medallion of her head, and it was to remain unknown to Alice until Christmas. Mary had been told to keep this a secret, and, like many children, enjoyed the legitimate privilege of concealing something from her elders. She kept faith as to the matter with staunch fidelity.

St. Clair was at home. He set the small maid on a stool, put a table before her, and invited her to make something out of a lump of moist clay. She worked at it ardently, asking advice, and trying with sedulous care to copy a leaf. St. Clair helped her, and went to and fro from her side to his own work, the maid chattering at intervals.

Meanwhile I gave him back the letters. He put them in the pouch of his blouse. When the sitting was over and he had set free the little one, he said:

"And now, what about these letters? What should I do?"

"You must do nothing, Victor, and I want you to promise me that you will not answer them."

"But why not?"

"Because that will encourage a folly. The writer may be an old woman."

"Great heavens, Owen!"

"Or an experimental schoolmistress."

"No."

"I am jesting, Victor; but for obvious reasons you must not reply."

"What, not a word?" He was evidently yearning to write to this romantic correspondent.

"I should do no such thing."

"I really must make some reply. I *must* make some reply."

I had meant to conceal my own conviction as to Sibyl having been the anonymous writer. Now I knew that unless Victor made me a distinct promise he would surely answer in a letter of poetic rhetoric.

I said: "My dear Victor, you cannot, must not reply to these letters, because—" and I hesitated.

"Because of what?" he urged.

"You yourself," I urged, "saw that they were unusual. You were troubled sufficiently to ask advice. Now you are in another mood and cannot resist the temptation to play with a perilous situation."

"What nonsense!"

Then I knew that I must speak frankly. I could not let Sibyl run the risk of a correspondence. I said: "You must not reply. If you had been a little more observant you would have seen that your letter-writer quoted Sir Henry Watton."

"Good heavens, Owen!"

"Yes, Victor. Sibyl Maywood wrote those letters."

At this time we were distant from my still-occupied child, at the far end of the studio. St. Clair turned suddenly.

"It is a damned lie, whoever said it."

"Hush!" I cried, amazed at this outbreak. The girl had begun to listen. "You are not very wise, nor very—"

"Oh, confound it! I don't believe it. Why the devil did you tell me?"

He was in the toils of an overmastering emotion, the reason for which I could not see. His chin muscles were twitching—an unfailing signal of emotional disturbance. Seeing the effort he was making to regain self-command, I went on talking of the conditions of physical health which in some rare cases bring on the irresponsible state of an alternate consciousness, in which people may write as Sibyl had done. At last he began to hear, and soon to listen, and by and by said abruptly: "Curious case, Owen." Then he laughed a kind of laugh not quite pleasing to hear, and said: "Well, I suppose you are correct; but what a charming reply one could have made!"

"St. Clair, you cannot mean that?"

"Yes. I did conclude to write to this woman. In her first letter she tells me her post-office address. I was troubled, but I meant merely to say a kind word, and—now, don't grin in that extra-exasperating way—I would have pointed out the folly of what she was doing. What you have said, of course, ends the matter, so far as I am concerned."

St. Clair, as an adviser of a damsel unwise enough to write him love-letters, did amuse me. I said: "You dear old fellow! You would begin your letter like a grandpapa and wind up like a lover.

"She wrote," I added, "in a state of alternate consciousness. The real Sibyl does not know that she wrote these letters. It is an hysterical phenomenon, strange to you, not unfamiliar to me. You must do nothing, and must speak of it to no one. If you get other letters, I, as her doctor, must see them. No one else shall do so."

St. Clair stood still a moment. "Yes, you alone shall see them. I mentioned them to Mrs. Vincent. She advised me to burn them. Take them. Keep them, Owen, and when it appears best to burn them, do so. I wish to say, Owen, that I am profoundly sorry. I spoke rather wildly. Do not scold me. I am the fool of my art. I know it too well. I am more than sufficiently punished. At first it seemed—well—then I thought what passing fancy I had called out was gone. I—well—no matter."

"For this abnormal result you are hardly responsible. Let us drop the matter for the present."

"Thank you, Owen"; and he set a hand on each of my shoulders. "Thank you, old friend, and kindly let what has passed here rest between us."

"Of course." And yet it had puzzled me.

We looked at Mary, still busy, and then I asked: "By the way, have you ever heard of Xerxes since your last bout with him?"

"No, never."

"Well, good-by"; and we left him.

Clayborne wrote me soon after this interview that he would be absent for a month or more; and we, of course, were glad to keep his cousin.

St. Clair had on him one of his visiting-spells. At times we did not see him in our houses for weeks together. It was his way, and we had long since learned one of the great lessons of friendship, not to insist on friends being other than their nature lets them be. Now, as I said, he was a frequent visitor, or, as Sibyl used at first to say, "caller." One Sunday evening he came in after dinner, at which meal we had as guests the Vincents. When St. Clair entered I was talking to Mrs. Vincent about Mary, her goddaughter. My wife and Sibyl were close together, exchanging little laughs as if in a game. They seemed very well pleased. What was the source of this flow of gentle merriment I do not know. I wondered, as I glanced at them, if men or women laugh more. I was about to put this question to Mrs. Vincent when, as I have said, St. Clair entered. He was clad in his studio jacket of brown velvet, with a careless red tie and a low shirt-collar, the same unconventional attire which once so shocked my good mother-in-law. He was in radiant spirits, handsome with that rare type of regularity of features combined with the look of intellectual energy. Alcibiades may have had it. Vincent, at ease in our friendly house, was hastily skimming the pages of the Sunday "Tribunal."

"And so you forgot us and your dinner?" said Mrs. North to St. Clair.

"I did, I did. But I had an adventure, a real adventure. Shall I be pardoned my failure if I tell it?"

"Yes, if it be told at once, because if I let you off a promised tale I never hear any more of it. There was that fine story of the man who advertised for a wife. Where is that, sir?"

"I promise," said St. Clair, "you shall have it, but this adventure was so interesting that I forgot your dinner and went to the club. On my way home I heard your piano reproaching me, and so here I am."

I said:

> "The wedding-guest he beat his breast,
> For he heard the loud bassoon."

"But it is not loud," said Sibyl. "It is of all the instruments the least heard, the softest."

"My dear child," said I, "this comes of living with Mr. Clayborne."

"There is a mania for accuracy nowadays," said my wife. "I see that 'Esmond,' my dear 'Esmond' is historically false; that Duke Hamilton would have been guilty of bigamy had he married Beatrix; that the Pretender never was in England in the reign of Anne. It is most provoking. And here is Sibyl finding fault with the 'loud bassoon.' When we come to taxing poets with want of accuracy it becomes— Owen, I want an adjective."

"Leave your adjectives to the imagination of your adversary."

"Good," she added. "Sibyl, I leave you the descriptive choice. Next we shall have absolute accuracy demanded in social life."

"Or, worse," said I, "exacted in conversation, or, worse yet, in domestic life."

"Is nature ever inaccurate?" said Sibyl. Usually simple, Miss Maywood would occasionally ask some such absurd question.

"She is always inaccurate," said St. Clair. "That is her charm."

"But define accuracy," said Vincent, behind the newspaper.

"I should have stayed at the club," said the poet. "At this rate I shall never tell my adventure. I insist on my right. I was about to dress for your dinner when my man said a gentleman insisted on seeing me. I found him in the drawing-room. He apologized for his visit, and said he was a younger brother of Mr. Gaston, once minister to Berlin. He laid a card on the table as he spoke. I expressed my pleasure at seeing him. I knew all the other brothers and had made busts of two of them. He desired to have a bas-relief of his daughter and to make an appointment and learn my terms. On my replying, he took out a pocket-book and wrote the needed information on a slip of paper. Then he said, 'I have a check in blank. Shall I settle now?' I thought this rather queer, and said, 'No, of course not.' 'Ah, I see,' he added, 'that I am out of money. Can you let me have twenty dollars? I am on my way to New York. But it is of no moment; I can cash a check at the St. George Hotel. They know me.' I said, 'That is needless,' and went at once to my secretary to get the money. Then I had a sudden qualm of doubt. I said, 'How is John Gaston's son? He was ill last spring; a spinal curvature, you know.' 'Oh, he is quite well now.' 'Ah, my friend.' said I, 'you seem

sadly ignorant as to your family. John Gaston has no son, and you are a fraud.' He replied that he had not come there to be insulted, and would go. On this I said: 'Don't rise. The little scheme is ruined. You are a scamp, but you did it all so well that you interest me. If you will take a cigar and sit down for a half-hour and tell me your true history I will give you twenty-five dollars, and I will not call a policeman.'"

"What did he say?" said Mrs. Vincent.

"For a little while, nothing. Meanwhile I took out my cigar-case. He took a cigar in silence, accepted a match, lit it, and, seating himself, said: 'You could prove nothing. You may do as you please. I shall not mention my name. I think I may interest you. I am a kleptomaniac. From my first remembrance I stole, and whatever I thus obtained gave me pleasure such as nothing else did. I stole and hoarded useless things like a raven; but as I grew older, though more cautious, I continued to steal. At last I found it agreeable to take a spoon or a fork off a table and leave it elsewhere, on the floor or on a chair. Of course I was in endless trouble, and at last was put in an asylum. I ran away easily, and an effort to prove me insane failed. At twenty-five I inherited a competency, and this proved valuable, because when detected I could pay. I know I am peculiar, because I steal utterly valueless articles, and I even steal from myself. I like to steal my hat and leave it in the attic and set every one looking for it. I find pleasure in elaborate plans of theft like the one you detected. It is a game of skill. I should have sent back the

money. I do not need it. I think I should have sent it back.' I said, 'Are you never arrested nowadays?' 'Yes. But I keep two closets full of gridirons, frying-pans, corsets, inkstands, women's bonnets, and what not. That always clears me, that and the doctors. You see, I am a kleptomaniac. I take quite useless things.' 'And could you stop thieving?' 'I think I could have done so once. I cannot now; I do not want to stop. I like it. I like the risk.' 'Don't you think,' said I, 'that a good sound thrashing might cure you?' 'Pain is a powerful motive. It might. I dread pain.' 'It is very interesting,' said I. 'Is it not?' said he. 'I knew it would interest you. But now I must go. I am much obliged, and of course I do not want the money. Thanks for a pleasant visit.' I showed him to the door, and he went away, a well-dressed man of thirty-five, in a neat silk hat, and carrying a slim, neatly folded umbrella."

"And was all that an invention of the thief?" said Vincent.

"No; it is probably," said I, "a true story. The man has a morbid pride in his mental disorder. Very likely he decorated the tale. You observe that he did not take St. Clair's money. One sees sane people who are distinctly proud of what may be to others disagreeable moral or physical traits. This man has a monomania. He sets all that is sound in him to assist his indulgence of the unsound impulse, and, at need, to protect him from legal or other consequences."

Said Vincent: "We all want our neighbor's goods. A thief takes them deliberately. An insane man takes them at first as a child takes, impulsively. At

last he learns the consequences, but meanwhile the impelling desire strengthens. These people should be physically punished. They disobey law and know that they do so. They say they cannot help it. I would raise the punitive consequences to the level of the impulsive activity."

"That 's a phrase worthy of Clayborne," said St. Clair; "but how would you do it?"

"Let me answer for Vincent," said I. "The only kleptomaniac I ever knew to be cured was a young woman. After her people, who were mechanics, had seriously suffered from her useless thefts, her father treated her as he would have done a child, and soundly whipped her. The consequences thus rose to the preventive point. After three such thrashings she got entirely well, and later said it was the only cure possible. I do not advise it."

"I cannot see why," said Vincent. "I should like to apply it to the megalo-kleptomaniacs like Xerxes."

"What a name!" cried Sibyl.

"This man's case," said I, "as he described it, is more complicated, and will end in some form of general mental degeneration. It is a mistake to suppose that only the honest and the sane take pride in the success with which they pursue their callings."

"The study of criminal natures," said Vincent, "must be interesting. Tell them, Owen, about the man you knew who was what he called a respectable thief."

"I will," said I, "but it is rather a long story. When I was a very young doctor, a man came to consult me. He was stout, rosy, and very alert in his

movements. He spoke fairly good English, but was, I thought, uneducated. He was known as an insurance agent, and lived with some old clerks in a house kept by the sisters of one of them. When first he consulted me he had very little money, and was, of course, charitably considered. Year after year he called on me at long intervals, being subject to slight gouty troubles. One day he came in looking pale and ill. He said to me apart: 'Please to look out of your window and see if a tall man is walking to and fro across the way.' I thought it an odd request, but did as he desired. There was no one there. I made no comment until he had received some needed advice, but felt that I might reasonably inquire as to what or whom he feared. He made no answer for quite a minute, sitting perfectly still. Then he said: 'You were, you always have been, kind to me. I sometimes think I ought to tell you something.' 'Do so if it will help you. Say nothing if it will not be of use for me to know. I hear too many confessions, and I am not a priest.' 'It seems mean to deceive a man like you—and I want to tell you.' 'Very well. What is it?' 'I am not an insurance agent. I am a thief.' I confess that, although it was even then difficult to surprise me, I was both amazed and interested. I said as much. The small, fat man regarded me attentively. 'Tell me your life,' I said. 'I will. I want to. I don't know who my father or mother was. I was born in the Bowery, and was fed and lodged and beaten by an old woman who had a peanut-stand. A man used to give her money to look after me. She taught me to steal fruit and vegetables

from the markets. I was clever at it. At fourteen I ran away and became a stable-boy in a circus. Pretty soon I got into the ring. At last the juggler took me, and in two years I could do all his tricks. I never quite gave up stealing. My skill in sleight of hand, I found, helped me in business. One day I had a bad fall, and lay three months in the Bellevue Hospital. When I came out the circus was in California, and I had to rely on my profession. I was careful and of wonderful dexterity, so much so that I am astonished other thieves do not learn to juggle. I never drank. It made me ill. I never did like to be with thieves. I learned to read from the street signs, and I went one winter to a night-school. At last I came very near to being arrested. It was the only time. It scared me so badly that I came to this city. In the train I met an old clerk. I told him that I was an insurance agent. It ended by my going to lodge with his sisters.' 'And you still live by theft?' 'Yes. I do most of it at the theaters here and in New York, as people go out in a crowd or when I sit behind them. I have had some large bits of luck, and I don't waste money. Thieves might lay by money if they were not such a bad lot. I like to read. I don't know a single thief. I like the country and animals. After a few years I tried my luck in the stock market. It is n't very unlike my regular business. I did pretty well, and with one thing and another, and a risky grab I made once in a Sound steamer, I have put away safely about thirty-eight thousand dollars. Now I am going to Karlsbad, as you advised, and I am going out of business, too. I shall get a little farm

in Kansas and have animals about me. I was afraid just now. I thought I saw the only detective I ever dreaded. Indeed, I shall be easier if you would let me go out the back way. It would be just like luck if I were to get pinched as I am retiring from business.' I said, 'Does it never strike you as wrong to live by theft?' 'No. Most people have too much. I had too little. I was left to go to the devil. Who cared for me? I tried often to get work. Either I could not, or I soon lost the place, or else I made too little to live upon. All around me was plenty. Was I to starve? I was like a bird in an apple-orchard. I wanted my diet and I did n't want luxuries. I can't see that it is worse than gambling in stocks, or bribing city councils to enable men to swindle a whole town. Why am I to be put in jail, and these big thieves let off? It is n't fair.' What could I say in reply, except that he was the more excusable thief? I let him out the back way, and we have never met again."

Said Vincent: "Is he serving his term somewhere, or is he married and settled down to peaceful farming, a church vestryman perhaps? Who can tell? He ought to meet Xerxes."

Mrs. Vincent had listened with the utmost attention. Now she said: "How delightful to see such people! I should so much like to have this fellow and Xerxes to dine."

"That is our difficulty, Anne," said Vincent. "We can never see these entertaining scamps. It must be very educational. There is an asylum for moral cripples sustained by the State. It is known as the

penitentiary. A visit there would gratify your taste for criminal society."

Sibyl said: "I once did know a man who was morally perfect, and who never had said or done a wrong thing from childhood to manhood. I was thinking that there might be those who never do or say a right thing. A great deal must be due to original construction!"

"That," said St. Clair, "makes us the victims of a corporeal fate. We are, therefore we must be. I like that. It lets a fellow off so easy."

"It is well for a jesting argument," said my wife. "If one lived in control of a world, how interesting it would be to take a man like the doctor's thief and set him as a child to live his life over amid better surroundings, with people who were both honest and intelligent. What chance had that poor fellow?"

I saw that Sibyl was thinking how she would make over her world. Very often I observed in her this tendency to apply to her own case remarks like that made by my wife. I said to her: "What is it Mr. Clayborne likes to quote from El-Din-Attar about this matter?"

"I recall it," said my wife, who, having once heard a short poem, could ever after repeat the most of it.

"I am the potter; Allah 's the clay.
Was it the potter? Was it the clay?
At his feet the fragments roll;
Lo! beside the wheel he stands
Wondering, with idle hands.
Let him gather up his soul,
And make the clay a poor man's bowl.

You may remember that he sets out to make of the clay a vase for a king."

"Yes," said Sibyl, quite cheerfully. "Some of us must be content to be the poor man's bowl."

"And yet," said my wife, "the clay is fit to make the king's vase."

"How we have wandered in our talk!" said Mrs. Vincent. "Mr. Clayborne hates it, but what his ideal of conversation may be I never clearly made out. He talks admirably, but he does not converse, because he is among those who think it better to give than to receive. When you present him with any little problem he retires into a leisurely corner of his mind, like a squirrel with a nut, to crack and consider the matter at lonely ease."

"He writes me that he will be at home very soon," said his cousin.

XIX

CLAYBORNE had returned, and Sibyl, the better for my wife's watchful care, was again at Holmwood, where she had now but little work. Clayborne had taken to speaking his many letters into a phonograph, and as the use of the hearing-tubes caused Sibyl to have headache, he employed a clerk to take off these records and to type-write his correspondence. Thus the secretary had little to do except to find the books he needed, to keep his table in order, and to answer his invitations. He was always unable to use a stenographer, for if he attempted to dictate, his clear, substantial English at once lost the valuable qualities of a style which, if lacking lightness and grace, was never diffuse or obscure. "My mind," he used to say, "becomes self-attentive when I dictate to an individual, but with the pen, or when relating thought to a machine, I am at ease."

It was our Christmas dinner, and, as always, we met for this glad season at Clayborne's. We were to spend the night, and, as some of us were busy people, we went to Holmwood that day at such times as pleased us.

I found Clayborne, an hour before dinner, sitting before his phonograph and talking with my wife and Sibyl. I heard him say: "It is humiliating to become aware that your mode of expression is influenced by the agency through which you record it; but there is one comfort. This machine can hear and record at almost any speed. No ordinary stenographer writes steadily more than a hundred and fifty words a minute, and I often talk too fast."

"The next question," said my wife, "is the rate at which an audience can use speech addressed to it. I have never heard a speaker I could not follow, but there are people who fall hopelessly in the rear when Phillips Brooks is rolling out his sermons."

"My trouble," said Sibyl, "is that I stop to consider something and get left behind."

"I wonder," said I, "what originally determined the rate of human speech, and if among the lower tribes it be any slower than it is among the more civilized. I have the fancy that the intellectual class does, as a rule, speak faster than the uneducated; but, of course, there are the exasperating exceptions of able men who speak as if it were needful to consider the rest of mankind incapable of quickly apprehending what is said."

"Yes," said my wife, "we once talked about this. You said that the diffuse talkers, the profuse talkers, are nearly always rapid. The combination of excess of talk with slowness of speech is what goes to the making of the high-class bore."

"You mentioned just now," said Clayborne, "that we once discussed this matter of the rate of speech.

I became interested, and wrote to the oldest reporter of the Senate. This is the substance of his reply. Speech at the rate of one hundred and twenty words a minute is slow, and below that number it becomes wearisome to listen to. The fastest talkers in the Senate reach a speed of one hundred and eighty words. That is three a second. But this is only for a minute or two in fierce debate. Uneducated Irish-women and negroes on the witness-stand are terrors to a reporter, and may rise for a minute to three hundred and twenty-five words. Finally, my reporter says, Phillips Brooks habitually spoke, when preaching, two hundred and ten words to the minute."

"That," said I, "is all very interesting. As I recall the great bishop,—and none knew him better,—in every-day talk he was not very rapid. I have heard his sermon rate set as high as two hundred and fifty. This I think is to overestimate the rate of his speech."

"But," said my wife, "does not the rate depend somewhat upon the size of the words used? Saxon words are short and those of Latin derivation long."

"That is well said," remarked Clayborne, "and as to that, also, my reporter has something to say. I have it here," and he turned to his diary.

"'English speech is numerically rapid because of the number of little Anglo-Saxon words.' You see he is writing with relation to reporting. He adds: 'I incline to believe that English is spoken at a higher word-rate than other tongues.'"

"I thought," said Mrs. Vincent, "that French was the most rapidly spoken language."

"That is a common belief," said Clayborne. "The reporters say it is not and that it is easy to report. There is another lingual matter which I have had occasion to consider."

"What is that?" I asked.

"Oh, simply what tongue is the most condensed. If I write out in English a clear statement, will a translation of it into French, German, or Arabic be longer or shorter than the original statement?"

Clayborne thought Arabic would certainly be the most brief—that is, would be the language which would use least space in rendering the meaning. French probably takes more space than English. Concerning German we differed, but as the rest of our party arrived at this moment, the question remained unsettled.

As we welcomed the Vincents, my wife said: "We have been terribly profound, and have settled and unsettled a variety of matters; we began about bores."

"I am sure, dear," said Mrs. Vincent, "that at times we are all bores to ourselves, if not to others."

"Or become bores as we age," said Vincent. "That is a fear I have always had."

"I hate people to talk of being old," said St. Clair. "To me the specter of age is the most terrible of all the ghosts that haunt the mind."

"He is very near to me," said Clayborne. "I do not dread him, but, like St. Clair, I do vastly dread pain."

"Ah, that is it!" said the poet. "He comes, that gray specter, with his hands behind his back. What

is it they hold? Ah, that is what scares me! But old age I shall never know—never."

"And why not?" asked Mrs. Vincent.

"I was once told that it would not be."

"I think that is horrible," said Miss Maywood. "And you believe it?"

"Yes. I did. I do."

"I should dislike to be sure of what to-morrow will bring. A prophet must have a sad life and be a very unpleasant companion," said my wife, laughing. "But who predicted your early demise?"

"Perhaps I will tell you after dinner. It is a long story."

"Come, then," said Clayborne. "You are to have to-day all the wines you desire, and one with a story."

"What! from you?" said my wife. "How very nice!"

We went in to dinner. Beside each plate was a little package, Clayborne's Christmas present, or, if it were too bulky, a little note explanatory.

"There is a letter for you, Mrs. Anne," said our host, "and that Mexican opal you admired."

"How beautiful!" said Mrs. Vincent, holding up the red jewel and then putting it on her finger. "I never saw as fine a stone. And the letter, may I read it?"

"Yes, certainly. It came to-day."

"To-day?" She looked up greatly pleased.

"What is it?" said St. Clair.

Mrs. Vincent laughed as she finished the letter. "You promised me for my orphans, Victor, the pay you were to get from Xerxes."

"I did."

"You defrauded my orphans."

"I did. They are overfed, pampered."

"I thought," said Mrs. Vincent, "that perhaps Mr. Xerxes Crofter would be more generous. I was told that he is rarely appealed to in vain. You see the result," and laughing, she held up a check.

"You wrote to Xerxes!" exclaimed St. Clair, who had his moments of credulity like the rest of us.

"Oh, no, no!" cried Sibyl, as she hid away her own present in her pocket. It also was an ample check.

Vincent, much amused, watched his wife.

"I know better who pays my debts," cried St. Clair.

"Yes," said Mrs. Vincent. "How can I thank you, Mr. Clayborne? I cannot."

"You cannot in my sense. You know what that real poet, El-Din-Attar, says: "Who gives is already thanked. Who thanks gives."

"And I," said my wife, "what am I to say? What a charming idea!" She rose and went joyously around the table, showing us a small basket of delicate gold wire with network spaces, just small enough to hold within it four royal pearls. They lay loose in the basket. One pearl was pink, one black, one a pale green, one a pure pearl. The gold basket was closed with a little padlock, and a tiny key hung from it by a chain.

"Don't look at me in that severe manner," said Clayborne to me. "Your wife may wear the basket on her own necklace. The pearls are for my godchild Mary. Get used to it. I shall add one every year."

"I surrender," said I. "You are as bountiful as Haroun-al-Raschid, and as lavish as Xerxes."

Meanwhile my wife opened the basket and rolled the great pearls on to a napkin.

"It was Sibyl's idea," said the delighted giver. "She said a pearl should never be pierced."

"Oh, no; wounded," said Sibyl.

"I have always had that feeling myself," said my wife, "and now more than ever. I shall feel that I was right."

We, the men, were all as kindly, if less extravagantly, remembered with scarf-pins in which were set antique intaglios from Clayborne's well-known collection of gems. And so the dinner went on merrily, with no memorable talk, but effervescent with the gay humor of people who had in common the remembrance of years of friendly intercourse and the glad freedom of entire trust. While the talk was flitting gaily from this to that, I observed that Vincent was unusually silent. I, being near him, spoke across Sibyl, and said, "Fred, is the opal heavy to bear?" He had an unexplained dislike to being given presents, and a better-concealed dislike to having any one but himself give gifts of value to Mrs. Vincent.

"No," he replied. "It was not that. Clayborne is privileged. I was recalling the fact that three times on Christmas day I have seen strange incidents."

"Such as?"

"Ah, two, the strangest, I cannot relate. One I can."

"And what was that?" asked Miss Maywood, overhearing us.

"It is worth telling. Many years ago a friend in Carolina fell heir to a life-estate in a large amount of

personal property at the North. I was trustee under the will. He also had a still larger fortune of his own in the South, in cotton and rice lands, in slaves, and in personalty. He was a violent partizan, and when the war came he and his son, a spoiled child, then a young man of twenty, entered the Confederate army. The father was killed in almost our last fight. When the war ended and things got settled, I went to Charleston, and finally made over to young Percival such securities as were held by me in the North. A very considerable personal property at the South had mysteriously vanished. The slaves were gone. Only the lands were left, and these, as my wife is too well aware, had become valueless. Young Percival went abroad, and in five years squandered all he had except the cotton and rice lands, which I kept for him by occasionally extorting from him enough to pay the taxes, or by personally paying them myself. At last he wrote me that he was on his way home, penniless."

By this time every one was listening to Vincent, whose wife said, as her husband paused: "And he was, Alice, the handsomest, the most charming, and most utterly reckless boy one could find."

"The boy," continued Vincent, "was a man of twenty-six. He had written to me previously in regard to a trunk of Revolutionary papers in my possession. I had brought them from the South. When his means became low he wrote me that a cousin would give him for these a hundred dollars. Would I kindly go over them and select any I wanted? The trunk was brought to my house, and it was on a Christmas afternoon that, as he desired, I overhauled

the contents of the chest. I found numberless letters, and sadly saw pass under my eye the names of soldier, sailor, statesman well known in our history. It seemed a wretched ending. Underneath all I found a long folio Bible, the family Bible of the Percivals. It was carefully wrapped up in stout paper. Tied to the back within this cover were four bulky envelops, sealed and addressed to young Percival. The book opened at the parable of the prodigal son, where the place was marked by a sheet of letter-paper. I began to be curious. My old friend had aided a weak mother to ruin their son. The father was always eccentric, and this, or perhaps his knowing his son too well, may have led him to leave what here I found. On the outer envelop of the large package tied fast to the Bible he had written: 'Soon or late, my dear son, you will find here what will make you far richer than I have ever been. If, through wasteful ways, you have become poor, this will make you rich once more. Use better what I now give.' Then I knew that here was the missing personal property which had so mysteriously disappeared. I sat reflecting over this queer affair, as I have said, on Christmas day, when, dramatically in time, came young Percival. To cut short too long a tale, I set before him the Bible, and drew his attention to the envelop on which his father had written his message. 'Yes,' he said, as he opened the Bible at the place marked, 'yes, I have eaten of the husks. I do not deserve that my dear father should have thus cared for me.' As he spoke he hastily tore open the envelops. Here was a nominal fortune, oh,

a large one, in Confederate cotton bonds, and perfectly worthless. I saw the young fellow reel, and caught him as he fainted. That is all."

"What a travesty of the 'Heir of Lynne!'" said St. Clair.

"But that is not all," cried Mrs. Vincent.

"I am sure it is not," said I.

"No. I, or rather we, took care of the scapegrace. Anne fell in love with him, and later we found phosphates on his lands. I must say that he is now well reconstructed in mind, morals, and estate, a happy husband, and a very watchful and rather severe papa."

"I envy your young Rebel," said St. Clair. "He had war, peace, ill luck, disaster, and final good fortune."

"And the permanent conscience called a wife," cried Alice.

"Nice woman?" asked the poet.

"Sensible, handsome, and amiable."

"The tale is complete. What of the other Christmas stories?"

Vincent said he could not tell them.

"I think I know one of them," said St. Clair.

"It is not possible," returned Vincent.

"It is the story of the five hair-pins."

"Victor," said Vincent, very gravely, "you know it, I see; but you will, of course, keep it to yourself."

"I will."

"How you could ever have learned it is past my power to guess."

"A woman," said St. Clair.

"Well, well," murmured Vincent.

"And shall no one hear it?" asked Sibyl. "Five hair-pins!"

"No one," said St. Clair.

Then again the talk became gay and general.

When we came to the end of a pleasant hour and a half, the cloth was removed, and the butler set on the table two decanters of old Madeira.

"A grape-juice," said our host, as he passed the wine to left. After it had gone round the table he added in his old-fashioned way: "Absent friends and your own good selves.

"Here, next," he said, "is the wine with a story. It is the Rose Madeira, Vincent."

"Indeed! I fear your ancient wines; but I must taste this. It is not quite perfect, Clayborne,—on its last legs, as our fathers used to say,—and yet it is still very fine. How old is it?"

"It was put in demijohn in 1798, and was before that in cask. You can detect the taste of the wood. You must all of you admit that I rarely tell stories, but—"

"Well," interrupted St. Clair, "for an historian, that is a crammer."

"Do not mind him," said my wife. "Please to go on."

"Vincent has heard it. It is a family legend. My great-uncle Rupert commanded the privateer *Rose*, out of New London. She was lucky, and during a West Indian cruise sent home several prizes, from one of which she supplied herself with provisions and several hogsheads of the wine you are now drinking. Soon after, while off Cape Hatteras, she was taken in

a calm by his Majesty's frigate *Olympia*. It was a boat attack, and only succeeded after one disastrous failure. In the second effort my uncle was cut on the head, but not severely hurt, and had also a wound in his left arm, a rather bad flesh-wound from a cutlass. He had so often declared he would blow up his ship rather than surrender, that when, as his flag came down, he turned to run below, his men seized him and prevented him from effecting his purpose. A prize crew of eight men, and a lieutenant by the name of Tregarthen, were put on the *Rose*. Three of the old crew were also kept to assist. My uncle seemed to suffer much. He was also left on the prize. As he sat dejected on the deck, no one disturbed him. The *Rose* received orders to repair damages, and then to make sail for New York. As the *Olympia* was about to continue her cruise in the West Indies, she sent aboard the *Rose* two prisoners, taken off a Yankee merchant ship which the *Olympia* had captured a week before. At dusk my uncle Rupert, being for the time free and on deck, saw, to his amazement, Mr. Swanwick and his daughter Margaret come up the side. He kept away from them, and, complaining of his wounds, went below to have them dressed. At night the wind failed, and again a dead calm came on. This lasted two days. In the dusk that night my uncle contrived to talk ten minutes to Margaret. He told her that she and her father were to seem total strangers to him. He was to give them reason to complain of him to the British lieutenant; also on no account, and under no circumstances, were she and her father to leave the *Rose*. Her father was

to say as much to the three Yankees left to help the prize crew. Having thus arranged matters, Uncle Rupert went mad. He did it well. He fell into a melancholy, and then at intervals became restless and excited. He declared he was George, the king. He tried to kiss Margaret, and when threatened with irons sat down and sobbed. After this he wandered about, a harmless lunatic, watched the repairs completed, and saw the lieutenant making brisk sailor love to the lady. On the third day a smart breeze sprang up, and just before noon they got under way. At this time the lieutenant went below to get his transit instrument. Uncle Rupert, loudly lamenting his fate, slipped away down the other hatchway. A minute later a wild cry was heard, and two or three men ran below to see the cause. Instantly they came up pale with fright, and told the lieutenant what they had seen. He in turn ran below. The door of the powder-room was open. Uncle Rupert had concealed on his person a duplicate key. To the horror of the lieutenant, there was Uncle Rupert in the magazine, seated on a keg and laughing maniacally. A second keg stood open beside him. He held in his hand a dry rope, the end of which was lighted and smoldering. The lieutenant fell back with an oath. 'Ho, ho!' yells Rupert, with his watch on his knee. 'Hurrah! Up you go! Got half an hour to live! King George forever! The Union Jack 's going to heaven! Two minutes gone. 'The lieutenant talked, implored, cursed. 'Five minutes gone,' cried Rupert. The officer advanced, cutlass in hand. 'One step nearer and up we go,' cried Uncle

Rupert. 'Say your prayers, and be quick,' and he blew the match to a red heat. The officer fled. On deck there was mutiny. The man-of-war's-men were already in a boat fifty feet away. Miss Swanwick had fainted. She did it well. The distracted officer ordered the Yankees to get out another boat. He would stay with the ship. He went to get his pistols, resolute to try conclusions with the madman. As he turned, Swanwick pinioned him, and in a moment was his master. He was a powerful man even at fifty. A sailor tied the officer's legs together. Miss Margaret, promptly recovering, ran below. Up came Rupert. 'Ready about, boys,' he cried. 'Take the helm, my man, and quick.' After one or two rapid orders he turned to the lieutenant. 'Lord, sir! did you think I would blow up Miss Swanwick? We have been engaged for a year.' In three days they were lying off Philadelphia. Margaret Swanwick's picture is in the hall, as you know. Of course Uncle Rupert married her. I heard that story when I was a boy."

"For a historian," said St. Clair, "it was cleverly told. I could improve upon it."

"No one could," cried Sibyl.

"Another glass?" asked Clayborne. "No? Well, then, let us smoke."

We lingered in the hall to see if Margaret Swanwick had the face heroic; but, as there was a difference of opinion, we deserted her for the company of tobacco, and followed Clayborne. As we went in, I said to him: "For a test of what people call nerve, the case of a madman below you in a powder-magazine leaves nothing to be desired."

"What was that officer's duty?" said Mrs. Vincent.

"It was plain," said Vincent. "He should have armed himself, got out boats, provisioned them, put every one in them, sent them a quarter of a mile away, and then gone down and captured the madman, or have gone to death with honor."

Said Mrs. Vincent: "If your uncle believed the woman he loved to be still on the deck, would he have blown up the ship? He told the lieutenant that he would not, or said something like that."

"I am not sure," said Clayborne. "His duty was always first with him. I incline to think he would have been capable of this or any other madness in such a moment."

"No," said Mrs. Vincent; "you are wrong. No man would do that."

"A sharp test," said I. "What became of the lieutenant?"

"Of course the story got out. After he was exchanged he was a good deal ridiculed, and at last shot himself."

"That was rather illogical," said my wife.

"And I," cried Mrs. Vincent, "would have jumped into the first boat."

"You would not, Anne," said my wife.

Said Sibyl: "Does any one know what he would do at such a time?"

"I do not," said St. Clair.

"He should," said Vincent, "either have done as I just now suggested, or have taken the risk of attacking the man when he first saw him. The pistols would not have helped the matter."

Said Clayborne: "I should have taken the boats and the crew and Miss Swanwick, and left the man I believed to be insane to do what he pleased. Courage which wins nothing material and saves nothing does not appeal to me."

"Oh," cried Sibyl, a trifle disappointed in her friend, "it saves honor, it sets example. It is not heroic; it is merely dutiful, the man's business. Like a doctor's, it is perilous. It is accepted with all its risks. Oh, I am ashamed for that man."

"Yes, I think on the whole you are right," said Clayborne. "On reflection, you are right."

"What," said Vincent, as he sat down, "Miss Maywood says of the value of high conduct as an example probably never occurs to men at these moments. I doubt if a man feels the urgency of motives in moments of peril, of need for high conduct, quick decision, unflinching courage. The motives are preparatory, what Owen calls chronic. They preact on character to create habits. The occasion comes, and then the disciplined mind is, without thought, imperatively obedient to duty."

"But," said my wife, "example does help; it is motive."

"Certainly," I said, "but not from being recalled to mind at a moment of danger. It has only a preparative value, as Vincent said. Of course an example set to others at the instant of peril is quite another thing."

"No doubt that is true," said Clayborne, "and when people are continually hearing of acts of courage it does have educational value. In our quiet modern

life we have not the constant risks which made battle and personal conflict common in the life of wilder days; and yet there is far more heroism of the best kind than in days when altruistic self-devotion had less motive power than it has now. Look at the papers if you doubt me."

"You are right," said my wife, who was apt to be a silent listener to our debates. "If we were to keep for a year clippings from the papers as to all the cases of gallant attempts at rescue, we should see how much nobler is our life than that of a day which some appear to regret."

"Very true," said Clayborne. "I saw in one week mention of two instances of boys taking risks to save drowning comrades. Here—I kept it—is a boy of eight who is badly burned in saving an infant. Here is a laboring man who is injured in stopping a runaway. It is constant; we hardly pause to notice it. Not long ago we talked over this very matter. Sibyl cut out for me the paragraphs for a week. There is also the familiar case of an engineer who could have deserted his engine and saved his own life. I agree that at the moment we act almost mechanically. The character-building accumulation of motives is like loading a gun; occasion pulls the trigger."

Sibyl had been listening very intently. Now she said: "I do not think you allow enough for the rapidity of thought in time of peril. A man thinks fast then."

"But," said Vincent, "we are now dealing only with cases of need for instant decision. He is alone, or in the loneliness of command, assured that death

is in his path. I am sure that one kind of man then acts with the decisiveness of a mechanism. Do you suppose motives as to duty or what men might say for or against him were in Cushing's mind when he drove that launch through darkness against the *Albemarle*? Or does the boy think as he plunges in to save a comrade? He is the moral slave of a despotic past. To pause and reflect is often fatal to noble action."

"I have listened with interest," said I. "Let me add a word. Example has its largest recognized values in the chronic affairs of life. I see this in sickness. A man says, 'What So-and-so bore patiently, I can bear.' If the influence of example be mysterious, it is nevertheless positive."

"Thank you," said Sibyl, quietly. "We talked of this long ago."

There was a momentary silence, then Mrs. Vincent said: "What a strange thing is the passing of an example from life to life! How endless it may be!"

"It has," said I, "been compared to the endlessness of physical force."

"But physical force must at last cease to be perceptible," said Vincent, "whereas example is reinforced by use, and if to-day feeble in effect, to-morrow it becomes potent."

"That gives one," said Mrs. Vincent, "a strong sense of the reality of character."

"I hate to think," said St. Clair, "of these unknown possibilities. Disease and pain are awful shadows. Let us think of them no more. Owen says they are our physical whips. What stuff! I was once ill. It made me angry. I am glad it did me no good."

"Then tell us your story," said I. "You are a very sensitive young man, and sometimes you talk fine nonsense."

"But when I come to think it over my story is by no means gay. My dear Mrs. Vincent hates snakes; it is about snakes."

"I abhor them," said this lady.

"And I," said my wife.

"And I," said Clayborne; "but go on."

Mrs. Vincent, drawing nearer to the fire, smiled as she remarked: "If I may be well warmed I shall not mind. I can stand anything if I am warm."

St. Clair rose as she spoke, and stood beside the ample hearth. He was, of course, in simple evening dress, but it became in a wonderful way his rich color and the fine carriage of his head. For some reason he was more than commonly serious. He hesitated a moment, and then said: "It is rather a grim story. It will seem incredible. I beg to ask that I be not questioned about it. I—" and again he paused. "There are on earth no other people to whom I would tell it. If any one, if Miss Maywood, perhaps, be in doubt, for it is rather thrilling, I shall not tell it."

"It is not stories, true or false, that I fear," said Sibyl. "Please to go on."

"Very good." As he spoke, he threw in the fire the cigar he had just lighted. Then for a full half-minute we sat quiet, respecting his silence, as he stood leaning against the mantel and facing us.

"You know that I spent a year in India. I saw while there much of the occult science, or, if you like,

arts of the Hindoo. Some of it is very absurd; some of it is—well—is not. I learned Hindoostanee and certain dialects, and because I was not English was enabled to see much that is jealously hidden from the conquering race.

"I was very curious as to what is known—I translate crudely—as the Temple School of the Moralities. Where it was, and how I came to see it, I am unwilling to state. Do not let that make you distrust my story. On one of the lower foot-hills of the Himalayas is a temple excavated out of the rock. There are others which are better known. Around a vast court are gigantic figures of Vishnu in his many incarnations. Between these are cells cut deep into the rock. In each is a man who has come to ask help of the god that he may be freed from some form of immorality. I have known three Europeans who resorted to this place. These men remained without food in their cells all day until set of sun. At fixed intervals the priests entered these cells and, touching each man on the forehead and on the lips, said, 'What was, is not. Let thy sin be starved, lest sorrow be fed.' At evening, when it grew dark, food was brought, usually fruit, or grain food such as rice. At midnight each man was given a drug which, he was told,—and I believe it,—had power to influence morally him who took it. In a few minutes it caused sleep. At morning the man awoke with the soul of a little child; the thief was honest, the violent gentle, the sensual pure in heart."

Clayborne rolled about in his chair, an uneasy listener. He had no power to surrender to a story. He said: "What stuff, Victor! The gist of it is stolen

bodily out of Ali Omar. We did not bargain for a half-hour of fairy-tales."

I never had seen St. Clair as he was that evening. He flushed a little and remained standing, with an elbow on the mantel, his cheek on his hand. "Dear old friend," he said very quietly, "this is a true story out of a man's life, told for friends alone. I know the verse you mean. Wait and hear me out."

"I can wait," said Clayborne, and fell back submissive.

"One word, Victor," said I. "This does not seem to me altogether as absurd as it does to Clayborne. We of the West know as yet of no drug which makes men better. Alcohol, opium, chloral, and, worse than these, cocaine and hashish, all ruin the morals of men and make them cruel, brutal, sensual, liars, and sometimes insane. Why there may not be some drugs which do the reverse I cannot see. I took mescal once, and among its splendid dreams of unearthly color I had a gentle desire to propitiate every one, to be pleasant and agreeable. This did not last long, and next day I found I had brought out of fairyland a furious headache and no permanent gain in amiability."

"Thank you, Owen," said St. Clair. "But now let me go on without comment. Pardon me; you have not done?"

"A word more," said I. "I have taken experimentally in my time a number of these drugs, and none of them appeared to me to have any immediate moral influence. I, of course, do not now include alcohol. Of their bad influence, when taken often or continuously, I am sure; but quite possibly the ten-

dency of some of them to impair the moral nature may be indirect. It varies with men and even with races. I have by no means said all that may be said. But now, Victor, let us hear the rest of your story."

"I have seen," he said, "the results of this treatment, and I cannot doubt its value; but it is not of this I meant to speak at length.

"After I had spent a month with these people I told a priest that I wanted to see the Cobra City. He said no European had seen it, and of the few natives who had ventured within it, not one in a hundred had returned. I was to think of it for a week and come to him again. He said there are men whom the cobra obeys and fears, but never were these white men or Christians.

"I went away, and a week later asked him to enter my tent. I threw apart the tent folds, and he went in. He saw a large daboia lying on my couch. He recoiled, crying out, 'It is death, sure death! Come away. It will come after us'; for this is the serpent men most fear, since it alone follows and attacks, and does not, like the cobra, merely await and resent hostile approach. He said, 'Where did it come from?' 'I brought it from the woods. See,' I said. I went to the couch and quietly picked up the great snake. As the priest fell back in fear I carried the serpent out and, setting it free, saw it glide into the jungle.

"He stood still, amazed, and then said, 'You must be of the blood of Aïssah. You shall see the City of the Cobra; but once in it you must pass through, and when you have come out you will have

knowledge you had not; for they who touch death grow wise. Will you go?' I said, 'Certainly.' 'Then I shall come for you at midnight; but have written for those dear to you a letter, because you may not return.'

"At twelve he came. 'You are unarmed?' I said, 'Yes,' and followed him up the mountain behind the temple. After an hour's walk we came to a small valley. At the far end I saw dimly, as we approached, that on each side of what we would call a cañon were gigantic figures hewn out of rock. 'Here,' he said, 'you must wait until the first faint light of dawn is seen. Then you will take off your shoes, and with bare feet and bare head enter. Yonder is the great street of the cobras. Do not dare to turn back. I shall wait for you at the other gate. It is not too late to refuse.' I replied by taking off my shoes and socks and giving them to him, with my pith helmet.

"An hour passed by after he left me. Then I saw the first gleam of dawn on a distant peak. I turned and walked up the incline and stood between the stone monsters, hearing beyond me a faint noise like the stir of leaves in the wind or the hum of rainfall. I went on slowly. It was still dusk below. Of a sudden it was pale morning overhead. Then I saw. The valley was perhaps a hundred yards wide. It was shut in by rocky boundaries so high that the day was long in finding its depth. The cañon sloped upward, narrowing. I stood still a moment. It was peopled; by degrees I made them out, an army of serpents, gray, inert forms pendent from bough or

rock-ledge, slowly moving loops, or on the ground gray tangles of lazily stirring, intricate coils.

"I went on, seeing the light increase. I seemed to attract no notice. Then in the dim haze, on the rock floor, some few feet away I saw! Across my path were some scores of the noblest cobras I have ever beheld. They stood erect, their heads some two or three feet above their anchoring coils. Between the spectacle-like markings of their wide-spread mantles the fierce little head with the dull eyes stood ready. They were in clusters, as it were, but thick across my way. The cobra is apt to sway from side to side, and now the hedge of poison-bearers swung thus to and fro, as if moved by some monotonous mechanism. This pendulum-like marking of what were really quite regular fractions of time somehow upset me. How often was it in the minute? How often? It was noiseless and regular, and seemed to murmur, 'Death and life, death and life.'

"I stood still a moment, feeling that I was losing intelligent self-control. For a moment my heart failed me. On one side of my path lay the skeleton of a man. I half turned to go back, when, as if this were a signal, all the slowly gliding or hanging or inertly coiled tangles acquired individuality, and came, not swiftly, but as if deliberately, toward me, gray, sinuous lines, convergent. I knew that I must go on. I knew that I must do more. In the mid-path before me stood, high above its coil, a great serpent. It stayed, attentive. Before this they had moved away as I advanced; now I must yield the path or they. I set on him unwinking eyes, and, bending, took the

cobra by the neck. He made no resistance, but, coiling around my arm, lay with his head on my outstretched palm, moveless.

"I do not explain it; but now I felt reassured and walked fearlessly up to the hedge of serpents. They slid away to right and left. I went past this thicket of death; and still the light increased, so that I saw where, on one side, a great cleft divided the rock wall. The serpents were fewer and moved more swiftly as I went on, shuddering if my bare feet chanced to tread on a round bit of branch or a cold rolling stone. Suddenly I heard faint humming noises. Something was disturbing this deathful assembly. In the dark of the rock cleavage, high to left, I saw two shining eyes. Ah, but I knew them well. I stood still, understanding that the tiger must first leap into the cañon and then would turn on me. For a moment he made no noise. Then I heard his roar and saw the splendid terror in mid-air, and then on the ground, twenty feet away. As he gathered himself, I heard a wild cry, and again a roar which echoed thunderous. He turned, terrible in his anguish. I saw a hundred gray death-whips strike and sting. He stood up on his strong hind legs, fell back, rose and smote, here, there, rolled convulsed with pain, tore them with his claws, bit them in terror unknown before to this fierce life of unconquered vigor. It was vain against these noiseless, multiplied, lethal onsets. He rose and fell again convulsed, his skin quivering in the last agony. The great cat was dead. Slowly the pallid, sinuous things, like live ropes, slid away, and stillness fell on me and on the valley.

"Despite the precious increase of morning light the depth of the cañon still left it in twilight obscurity. I saw as I went on that the rocks were hollowed into deep caves on each side, and that between the rock walls I was walking barefooted on a narrowing path. I moved slowly and carefully with chilled feet, fearing lest I might tread on some one of these languid coils and convert it on the instant into a swift giver of death. The walls of rock were here about sixty feet apart, and in their dim grayness were many blacknesses. These were caves, out of which now rolled, with slow disentangling writhings, unnumbered cobras. They came forth from crevices and hung motionless from bush and rock shelf. I was in the heart of the Cobra City, and, like as the folk of a town come forth to see a stranger, came those terrible citizens. One single beautiful cobra in his pride of power with his mantle spread is a splendid fear. Here is absolute, unreasoning courage. Here is death, swift, sure, implacable, without remedy. Around me were thousands. Many came close to me as if curious, following me with swaying heads, the wide neck cloak, shrinking or agitated as it was spread wide when angry doubt dwelt in those cold, pitiless eyes. Some touched my bare feet; some retired slowly, crawling back to their house caves; others stood in tall ranks as I passed, their small heads swinging to and fro on a level with my waist, for cobras like these had I never seen in cave or jungle.

"Meanwhile I grew cold. I do not think it was with earthly fear. If there be some unnamed emotion which is such terror as may come to a man in another

world of judgment, I had it. The sleek, slowly moving folds of the cobra stirred about my arm, and the small, deathful head moved uneasily. If in what I must call the agony of a too long and enfeebling emotion I should let go my grasp, release it, I was lost. That I knew. The light increased, the cañon narrowed, the tall death-givers folded their war cloaks and slowly retired to cave and crevice. I knelt down and set free my hostage, caressing with my hand the neck and head. It crawled away slowly, and I was alone.

"Before me lay a dark cavern. It was the only exit. To return was to die. I went on in absolute darkness. Suddenly I stood still. The pathway went downward. I groped my way with outstretched hands and cautious feet. The darkness was as complete as darkness ever can be. At last I felt that I was again losing self-control. I had been in a state of perilous tension. I saw huge shapes of gigantic serpents swaying over me. Then I heard the familiar rattle of our own crotalus. Upon this I used my judgment as one does in a dream, saying, 'Nonsense. In Hindoostan! There are no rattlesnakes here.' But then a vast serpent towered over me like a column, and swayed and drew back his head till I saw the fangs play in the upper jaw—pure phantoms all. I staggered forward, fell, crawled a little way, and fell once more; and this was all I remember.

"When I revived I was lying in the sun, my head on the priest's lap. 'What was it I saw?' said I. 'I know not,' he said. 'You went by unharmed. You are snake-wise. You will walk unhurt on the viper

and through the nests of the daboia. If you have a foe, a man you would kill, a woman who has slighted you, you have now only to go to the opening into their city and ask help. There will come forth nine who will go by jungle and marsh and byways till they find the foe of your father's son. For him and his wife and his child they will abide until the thing is ended; and if one cobra be left he will come to you, and, seeing him, you will need no more news of your foe, for the thing will have been done by those who turn not back. A thought was given you in the darkness, yes, something more convincing than thought.' It was true. I had a definite sense of a vast and sudden outflow of life, as of having spent swiftly in an hour years of existence. It was as if from a book you are reading unread chapters are torn. 'This you have learned,' he said, 'and what else?' 'That I cannot, may not, say.' 'The sahib is right. He is prudent, as one of a sudden grown older should be.' Now you know why I shall not live to be old. And, dear friends, all this poor priest's talk, for you nonsense, is but a part of the cobra beliefs with which India is filled; but as to the rest, believe it or not as you like. I have never before been willing to speak of it. I never shall again. Give me a cigar, Clayborne, and some brandy, please." He sat down and wiped his forehead.

Whether this was a true story or an adventure related with additions, or but a dream vividly told, we never knew. St. Clair said, as he took his seat, "Take it as you please. It is true." At all events, the effect of his narration was enough to satisfy any teller of

stories. There was silence for a time. Then Sibyl said: "I should have liked to have been with you. I think serpents beautiful. I do not believe they would hurt me. I can handle bees."

"Indeed!" said St. Clair. "Then no other wild thing would hurt you, certainly no snake."

"It is dreadful," said Mrs. Vincent. "I shall dream of them. Let us talk of something gay. I would far rather have had the story of the marriage by advertisement."

Clayborne sat at ease, smiling grimly. "Let us have a little rational talk."

My wife said at last: "Then I shall be critical. I don't believe your story, and I do not want to believe it. I do not think you should have told us that you are sure you will not live to be old."

"I did not ask you to believe me or it. It is true."

"Please not to die soon," said Sibyl. "It is so inconvenient for other people." It was not like her, and we laughed merrily.

"The cobra charm is broken," said I. "I wonder how Xerxes keeps Christmas."

"And," said St. Clair, "how some keep Christmas whom he has ruined. But the word reminds me of something I nearly forgot," and thus speaking, he went to an alcove and came back with his bas-relief of my daughter Mary. "There," he said, "Mrs. North, is my Christmas gift. Forget the serpents. No wonder women hate them."

It was a charming head, with that strange look of tender mystery about it which belongs to childhood,

and yet with the look of alert intelligence characteristic of our pretty, wilful maiden. My wife turned with full eyes, and taking both of St. Clair's hands, thanked him.

"We forgive you," said Mrs. Vincent.

"All?" he asked. "Everything?—all my sins, past and present?"

"Yes, and to come," said Mrs. Vincent. "We have immense belief in your capacity to test our good faith."

"Thanks, my dear lady. I accept the absolution and the indulgences. They come aptly."

"What have you been doing?" said Clayborne.

"I have a mighty mind to have this absolution put on paper," said the poet.

"We promised," said my wife. "I am sure you have been very naughty. Confess."

"Are you in love, married, out of debt? What is it?" cried Vincent.

"Ah," said St. Clair, "it is no light matter. My dear Clayborne, have you heard again from Kant?"

"What stuff is this?" growled our host.

"Is personal consciousness a fragment of the perceptivity of the world-soul?"

This was high fun for Alice and me, who were in the secret.

"What!" exclaimed the scholar.

"Excuse me," cried St. Clair, laughing. "In the words of Alcott, 'Is there not somewhere in the universe an Eternal Tea-pot?' How about double souls, Mrs. Vincent, and the thirty-seven religions of Boston? And have you again overdrawn your bank-

account? I heard Vincent say so a week before the séance. I believe you once used to add your checks to your balance."

"Shame, shame!" cried Anne Vincent. "What an outrage!"

Upon this we broke into inextinguishable laughter, St. Clair retreating behind the table and gleefully clapping his hands.

"I must get a little space between us. I did it! I am Weevils! Lovely name! I was Weevils! Thank Heaven, I am forgiven. Three cheers for Weevils!"

"Did you know of this, Frederick Vincent?" said Mrs. Vincent, severely.

"Not I. Was I not described? Accept my thanks, Victor."

"And I, what a pretty moral lesson I got!" said Mrs. Vincent. "Let us laugh and forgive, but never forget."

We certainly forgave, for in laughter is forgiveness, and we were humbly merry over this gigantic piece of mischief.

"At least I have relieved the gloom," said St. Clair, "and I have a clean slate. What dear people you all are! If I had only had Xerxes, too! Think of the freedom of speech one has. I should have called up a man he and his partner ruined, and who shot himself. The things that man would have said to Xerxes! What a lost opportunity!"

"Are we going to relapse into the serious?" said Mrs. Vincent. "I forbid it. Come, Alice; come, Sibyl. Let us go to bed before they make us sad again. A merry Christmas to you all, good gentlemen; and so,

good night. It is useless, Fred, to tell you not to smoke too much."

"Entirely. Good night, Anne."

"It is Christmas eve. We should have had a carol. Good night."

A half-hour later St. Clair went out of doors. I heard the crunch of his feet in the dry snow. Then presently he began to sing, and I knew it was a carol in answer to my wife's wish. We went to the window and raised the sash. This was what he sang:

"King Christmas sat in his house of ice,
And looked across the snow.
'Hallo, my little man!' he cried,
'Now whither dost thou go?'

"'I go, my lord, along the way
That all my kin have gone,
Where you, my lord, shall follow me
Before another dawn.'

"'Right gaily,' cried the Christmas King.
'Who ride to-night with thee?'
'The days of grief, the days of joy,
Are they who ride with me.'

"'God keep thee merry, little man;
Go whisper them that mourn
How surely comes again the day
When Christ the Lord was born.

"'And be not sad, my little man,
But when thou too art old,
And stumble o'er the wintry waste,
A weary man and cold,

"'Right cheerily, I pray thee, then
To keep this gracious tryst,
And leave thy weary burden here,
Where cares grow light, with Christ.

"'Now bid thy gallant company
Ride onward without fear;
For I, the King of Christmas,
Have blessed the glad New Year.'"

As he ceased, I heard my wife say from her window, "Thank you, thank you," and then Mrs. Vincent's rich voice rang out overhead in a verse of the old English carol:

"God rest you merry, gentlemen;
Let nothing you dismay.
For Jesus Christ, our Saviour,
Was born on Christmas day."

XX

THIS was the last of our pleasant dinners for many months. Clayborne discovered that he must consult the Archives of Simancas, and perhaps visit Constantinople. He wished to take Miss Maywood with him. I positively forbade it, to her disappointment. She was not strong; and, as Clayborne traveled at a rate destructive to comfort, I was sure she could not endure it and retain even such uncertain health as she still possessed. St. Clair had been well paid for two busts, and, as usual when money was abundant, he became restless. One day he disappeared, leaving a note for me to say that he had gone to Mexico, and did not my wife want some black opals? To complete our social losses, Vincent had a series of annoying attacks of influenza, and I felt that it was needful to order him to Florida. Sibyl settled down with a brevet appointment of governess, and I to complete my book. In this task my wife took the utmost interest. It was on character-building, and was, of course, dealt with from the view-point of a physician.

"Where are you in the book?" she asked one night when, as usual, she claimed what she called her own

hour before she went to bed. After that I took to a novel and a final cigar.

I said: "I am wondering what influence diet has on character. I should like to know if children brought up as vegetarians would be different from such as have meat added."

"Are not meat-fed dogs cross?" she asked.

"That is an old notion; whether correct or not I do not know. It is certain that some people who are old and have weak arteries become clear of head and less irritable if they give up meat diet. I have seen extreme ill temper in persons fed on meat alone for a year."

"Do not you remember St. Clair telling us that the long fasts of Ramadan, the Mohammedan Lent, make people cross, and enormously increase at that time the number of divorces?"

"Yes, I recall it. Fasting can hardly contribute to human virtue."

"Is it possible, Owen, to live on meat alone?"

"Yes. It is done by the Gauchos, and has been done by sick people. The patient gets very thin and very red. The blood-cells may then run up in number to six million for each cubic millimeter."

"And they should number?"

"Well, a man ought to have five million. It varies. A woman has about four million."

"How humiliating!" said my wife, laughing. "I shall take to meat diet."

"Don't, please. Mary might regret it, and I."

"I shall reflect on it, Owen."

"And don't introduce it, dear, into the colleges f

women, in order to the lifting of the more anemic sex to the level of man."

"Why not?" she cried, laughing. "Or why not bring his excess of blood down to our number? Perhaps he would then be easier to live with."

"Kiss me, and go to bed," I said, laughing.

"Have you a nice novel, Owen?" It was part of her care of me to provide me with this evening diet. I found it cleared my head of the cobwebs of the day.

"No," I said. "I am studying boy character in a report I have here of the McDonough School, near Baltimore. It seems to be little known."

"What is it?"

"Oh, the school is in a vast woodland, and this is full of nut-trees and all manner of small game. The boys by degrees made game laws and nut laws, punished those who broke them, and had school meetings to arrange these matters. It is an illustration of the parliamentary instincts of our race."

"How interesting!"

"The bigger boys, like barons of old, at last held by force the best of the game preserves, and claimed, on leaving school, the right to will their property. Thus property accumulated in the hands of the strong. A social revolution against this selfishness was checked for a time by bribing the socialist leaders with land grants. As taffy, the great luxury of the school, required butter, the ounce of butter allowed at each meal became the circulating unit,—in fact, their money,—because it did not vary and because it was needed to make taffy. So many 'butters' were the price of a rabbit, and so on. It is too long a

story to relate in full. I have found it valuable. It was published by the Johns Hopkins University. I shall keep it for you."

"I wonder," said my wife, "if in a girls' school any such rules would be made."

"In one, I believe, they regulated in some way the picking of flowers. I never heard the details. But as they don't climb trees for nuts, or collect birds' eggs, or trap rabbits, there might be small occasion for such laws."

"They should do all," said my wife, firmly. "They shall have in my college five million corpuscles and climb trees."

"And wear—I fear to go on—and never, never condescend to the low estate of marriage."

"Never," said madam, "unless they desire to be as unhappy as I. Good night, you dear, bad man."

XXI

THE Vincents, vastly bored by Florida, had come home. On the 25th of May I received a note from Clayborne: "I landed yesterday. Shall be with you to-morrow after dinner. Ask all our round-table folk. I need a little good society." St. Clair had arrived a week before, brown and handsome. On the day named, Mrs. North and I were unluckily engaged to dine with my wife's mother. Excusing ourselves, we came away early, and, returning home, found Sibyl and St. Clair in my library. Although I was still uneasy about Miss Maywood's fluctuating health, she had seemed to us to have quite overcome her emotional weakness, and nothing in her manner to St. Clair now betrayed a trace of the unfortunate influence his folly had caused. When we entered, he was standing silent before a cast of the wasted features of Keats. Without the usual conventional greeting, or even a turn of the head as we entered, he said: "What is this, Owen?" As he spoke he took, from a hook where it hung under the mask, a small brass shield surmounted by a coronet. "Owen, what is this, '*Crede Byron*'?"

"Ah," said I, "that is an illustration of 'Tout vient à qui sait attendre.' When I was a lad of eighteen

and adored Byron, I was once with my father in the house of Mr. W——. He told us that when young he had for his gondolier at Venice the son of Byron's boatman. One day, in this man's house, he saw the children playing with this brass. He learned that it was the poet's arms and coronet, and had been long used on his gondola. Below is the hook for a lantern. As we walked homeward, I said to my father: 'How much I should like to have that relic!' 'Ah,' said he, 'you will live to get many things in this life, but never that—never that.' Last week my friend Mrs. S——, Mr. W——'s daughter, gave it to me."

"I envy you the possession. Wise Protestants smile at the Catholic's passion for relics, but even Clayborne has it in his own way. Byron died too soon."

"Mr. Vincent," said Miss Maywood, "says we may divide great men into two sets, those who die too soon and those who live too long."

"A pregnant text," laughed St. Clair, "and much matter in it. Byron died too soon. To know what he might have become, you should read his letters."

"Fine praise; even Clayborne admits that," said I.

"Was it not, my dear Owen," returned the poet, "Goethe who so greatly admired Byron's letters? One has a most natural curiosity as to these uncompleted lives, and most as to those who fall in early middle life."

Meanwhile St. Clair stood looking down at the brass escutcheon he had taken from the wall.

"'*Crede Byron*,' what a strange motto for him! How cynical is time! If Shelley may be trusted, these brasses must have seen some queer adventures.

'*Credo Byron*,' what a sad plea!" And as he spoke he replaced the brass below the pensive mask of that other poet, the greatest of those whom, alas! the gods loved too well.

"Perhaps now," said my wife to St. Clair, "you will attend to the living and say good evening."

"Ah," cried St. Clair, turning, "you know, I hope you know, how glad I am to see you. What need to say so? Let Miss Maywood read Byron, Owen. She has never read a line of him. Clayborne hates him; but he hates everything in verse since Shakespeare."

"She shall," said I.

"Ah, he will never become like so many, a mere scholars' poet, his works a playground for critic schoolboys. He will have in every age his audience. He will always interest. Virility is a fine assurance to a poet of a long life of fame."

"The master," said Sibyl, "says that he is a poet of the obvious. I did not understand."

"I think I do," said St. Clair, "but it is false criticism. It is how you say and interpret the obvious that is of moment. Rest sure that he will live. He is of the immortals. No man can escape entirely the influence of his time. Byron felt it, shows it. But there is still enough of the forever in Byron to be secure of constant appeal to man. Read him, Miss Maywood."

Then Sibyl said one of the unexpected things which often had small relation to the present subject of talk:

"It is hard even to conceive of that which you call immortality of appeal. Social life, tastes, sentiment

or the manners of sentiment, all change so much. As to that other immortality, I wonder if in that life to come, mortality, the certainty of coming to an end, becomes inconceivable."

"Ah!" said St. Clair. "Surely, to know yourself as endless, not merely to feel that you are, must be—well, I fear that I should think it a doubtful privilege. Now, I know that I had one end; some call it a beginning. It does n't seem correct not to have another end."

"Sibyl," said my wife, "your texts are pretty grim at times, and Mr. St. Clair's sermons upon them fantastic. Do Mr. Clayborne and you spend your days over these cheerful riddles? Thank goodness! here he is at last, and the Vincents, too."

She went forward and greeted Clayborne with both hands. "And so they gave you a degree at Oxford? I hope you brought home your gown. We were very proud. And Spain—Madrid. Sit down and tell us all about it."

Clayborne was at his best and lectured on Spain to his heart's content. "I saw one bull-fight," he said. "I shall never see another. It made me ill, what John Bull calls sick, and I could not get out. It is not a thing one can venture to describe. A woman fainted. The mob hissed her. At last a man was killed, a rare incident. I was not as sorry as I ought to have been."

"I have seen it," said Vincent. "It is really a spectacle which cannot decently be put on paper with all its horrible details."

"And yet," said Clayborne, "a nation throngs to

see it. To tamper with it has unsettled ministries, and even the church, once resolute against it, does no longer deny absolution to the bull-fighter mangled by the tortured bull."

"Oh, do not talk of it any more," said Sibyl. "And yet you liked the Spaniards."

"Yes, the lower classes, the country people, oh, very much. The rest I did not like as well. What I liked least in Spain was the certain uncertainty as to when you were told the truth."

"I rather fancied it," returned St. Clair. "It gave a new flavor to life, kept one alert."

"I can give you a droll illustration," said Clayborne. "The day I arrived I went in my carriage to the great picture-gallery. My courier said, 'The gallery is closed. Wait a moment, sir.' I was about to get out. He went up the steps, and I saw him for a time in busy talk with a well-dressed man, who then disappeared, while a servant opened the door of the gallery. My courier returned, said, 'It is all right,' and for three hours I wandered alone, with no company but Velasquez, Titian, and the rest. Next day, on entering the gallery, I saw, as I passed, the man who had ordered me to be admitted. He was engaged in pleasant chat with my courier. They laughed so much and seemed so well acquainted that by and by I asked what it meant. 'Oh,' said my courier, 'he is the guardian. He was congratulating me on how well I lied to him yesterday.' 'And what had you told him?' 'Oh, as he did not see you, I told him you were to be in Madrid only half a day, that you were an English general, eighty years old, on your way to

see your sick son at Gibraltar, and would never be here again. Then I gave him five francs, and you got in.'"

"How dreadful!" said Sibyl.

"One gets used to it at last," said Clayborne.

"But that must have been very bad for you," she said, at which we laughed, and she cried out, coloring a little, "Oh, I did not mean that."

Some one, Vincent probably, hoped that here at home he would recover his moral tone.

"I was in Spain," said St. Clair, "when I was a fellow of twenty-two. I saw one bull-fight, and came away disgusted. It is so brutally unfair. That night—it was at Seville—I was fool enough to cross the bridge about nine and wander in the quarter where live the matadors, Gypsies, and worse. It was an ill-lighted tangle of lanes and narrow streets. At last I saw a bright glow in a long alley. I went up it and came into a noisy café, half full of the worst-looking rascals I ever saw. I sat down at an unoccupied table, and was soon aware that I was in hostile company. Now and then a fellow turned to stare at me. I sat still and lighted a cigar, making believe that I was not scared. I was. Presently a splendidly made beast of a man in a gorgeous costume came to my table and sat down and said something. It was very insulting, a fine temptation to a row. I called a garçon, clapping my hands as one does in Spain. Then I said in my best Spanish, 'Six bottles of the best wine,' and to my neighbor, 'Let us drink. Bring all your friends, señor. May I offer you a cigar?' He looked at me puzzled, took the cigar, and then the

hand I held out, and shouted something in a dialect unknown to my Castilian tongue. At once we were surrounded. 'More wine,' said I. 'More.' In five minutes I was talking bull-fights, and was safe. Lord, what stuff I swallowed! At last my friend said, 'Come and see the bull-fight dance.' I followed him. We went out into a spacious portico. He elbowed his way to the inside of a vast ring of men whom I longed to sketch. Here he called for chairs, and we sat down on a marble floor. In the middle of the court stood a tall woman in a short black silk skirt and bodice, black silk stockings, and black slippers. She was a light brunette, with large blue eyes and a quantity of brilliant red hair. A black ribbon tied under her chin, and a second secured at the back below this coil of hair, kept firmly in place on the top of her head a pair of horns. On the tip of each of these was a small pad well chalked. As we sat down she began to dance to the wild music of guitars, castanets, and cymbals. The players were in black velvet, and wore caps with a silver spoon on the front. What this meant I did not understand."

"I do," said Clayborne. "But go on."

"Then let us sit down," said I, and St. Clair continued:

"She danced with grace, and clearly enough enjoyed it. Presently one, two, three fellows in gay dresses came out of the crowd and danced around her. Each man had a long bodkin of horn or wood, ornamented with red silk tassels. As they flew around her, these men tried to set their darts in her coil of red hair. She, in turn, sought to escape, and

to touch their dark velvet jackets with the chalked horns. The music quickened, the crowd yelled applause, and the dance became wilder. It was really a most beautiful thing to see. When she touched a man, he fell out amid jeers; when he left his dart in her hair he retired laughing, having won his drink. After an hour I rose to go. 'Not alone,' said my friend; and, accompanied by him and two other splendid scamps, I went away. When we had passed over the bridge I took out my little silver match-box and gave it to the chief of my escort. He thanked me profusely, and said: 'I am Sanchez, the picador. Name me, and you are safe over there; but go no more, except in the daytime, señor. *Buenas noches.*'"

"What a fine picture it would make!" said my wife, and we thanked him for a word-sketch charmingly rendered, and told as only St. Clair knew how. Then the talk went back to the question of national respect for truth, and at last Mrs. Vincent said: "There are people who seem naturally unable to tell the truth."

I said that was a rather strong statement, but that it was one of the forms of mental disorder.

"I saw," said I, "not long ago a woman, a lady in middle life, who began to alarm her family by lying. She was not merely inaccurate from loss of memory. She became so unable to tell the truth that it was generally safe to assume as true the reverse of what she said. If you asked her what time it was, she looked at her watch and said twelve if it were six o'clock. She invented the most singular and perplexing stories, and once calmly assured a woman that

she had heard her husband had been guilty of forgery. She always denied these stories when challenged, and never repeated her tales. It became at last a very serious matter. I advised a change of all her surroundings."

"You might," said Vincent, "have suggested Spain or Italy as a homeopathic health resort."

"I should think her a fit inmate for an asylum," said Clayborne.

"No one," said I, "should be sent to an asylum unless because of poverty or because of being so dangerous that he cannot be treated outside of a hospital."

"Is that a common opinion among physicians?" said Vincent.

"It is becoming that. There is no special value in an asylum. The treatment of insanity, to be of service, depends on individualized study of cases, and where there are hundreds how is it possible?"

"I have in me," said Clayborne, "that which enables me to explain the possibility of almost any crime, but nothing which helps me to conceive of my becoming insane."

"Nor have I. But if I had to live perpetually among the mentally unsound, amid the hordes which crowd our State asylums, I should certainly end in a condition of what I may be allowed to call intellectual despair. There is too little success to feed hope; I like to keep him fat."

"Hope is feminine," said Alice.

"Thanks; we will argue that," I said. "I cannot see that it is 'big medicine,' as the Indians say, to put an

insane man in the company of the insane. Rather should all around him be of the sanest."

"That seems plain to my mind," said Clayborne. "But if, as appears likely, there is a physical change back of and responsible for the moral and mental disturbance, how can a normal moral or mental environment be of value?"

"It cannot as long as the physical, let me say the crude pathological, alteration of brain is still actively present. But this is too technical for talk, would take too long to make clear."

"No," said Vincent; "pray go on."

"Better not. We will leave it. But I like to add that in some insanities the abruptness of recovery is such as to disable us from believing that the physical mechanism was ever gravely altered. When we come to study the long-affected brain of the insane, how much of the changes seen is cause and how much consequence is as yet our constantly recurring riddle."

"You interest me," said Clayborne. "Does the normal brain-action involve visible alteration of structure?"

"Fatigue does."

"A fit of wrath we look upon as natural. Would successive fits change the brain-tissue?"

"Possibly. The furious maniac, the victim of chronic anger, has usually some distinct organic affection of the tissues. But this is hard to discuss lightly. One sees (the case is rare) a woman in profound apathetic melancholy for years. One morning she resumes her place at the tea-urn, and says: 'One

lump or two, John? I forget'; and so is well! What happened?"

"It gives me," said my wife, "a shuddering sense of how near we may be to such a state."

"No," I said; "it makes one feel how near all the while she was to our state."

"That is a close approach to an intellectual bull," said St. Clair. "I like to see you wise folks stumble."

"Some subjects," said I, "are unfit for the quick, uncertain thought of mere talk. This is one. *It* were better left to the pen."

"I," said Mrs. Vincent, "must say that sometimes sleep furnishes me with dreams which give me a glimpse of the fact that we may have within us a quite populous hospital full of insanities; and, bless me, I am sometimes very wicked in my dreams. I stole Fred's pocket-book one night last week."

"That suggests care," laughed Vincent.

"Or experience," cried St. Clair.

"Has sleep no conscience?" said Sibyl. "I often have vague impressions when awake of having done things which were wrong. Might that be a sort of remorse for something which happened in sleep and is forgotten?"

I glanced at my wife as Sibyl spoke.

"I know," said I, "a woman of the highest character who continually dreams crime and is tortured by remorse."

"What an atrocious suggestion!" said St. Clair. "It is bad enough to be responsible for our waking wickedness."

"What strange things you doctors must see or hear!" said Mrs. Vincent.

"So says Alice when she wants to be entertained. She loves stories as a child loves them. Usually she casts that fly in vain. Concerning most of life's strangest experiences my lips are professionally sealed. Sometimes they may be told when years have gone by and death has removed all concerned."

"Do be good and imprudent and tell us," said Mrs. Vincent.

"I myself once brought you a case," said Vincent, "which the patient published widely, until she quite lost her reason. You may relate that."

"It is hardly a story. The one you mean was the case of a woman who complained that her thoughts were solid and cast shadows on her mind. These, she explained, were colored shadows; anger cast red, jealousy black, love blue shadows. I asked could she see them. Yes, in her mind."

"Let me stir your memory again, Owen," said Clayborne. "L——'s case became public property. You may tell that."

"Yes," said I; "that is better worth telling. It was most curious. This was a man of forty, who was accomplished, intelligent, rich, and a bachelor. He came to me and stated, as he did to every one he met, that he was the devil. This is a delusion I have seen more than once, but commonly persons so afflicted are not wicked. This man said that he had long doubted if he really were Satan, but that now he felt sure. 'Then why come to me?' I asked. 'Because there are moments when I still doubt.

I am at times sorry for something, and that does not seem natural to the devil.' As his case developed, he became more confident that he was Satan, and was very cunning in his efforts to conceal his belief. Here comes in the difference between this case and all others I have seen. He began to act as if he were a fiend; not by doing things which would get him into trouble, but by acting with intelligent caution the rôle of tempter. I was going out of my house with him, when a dissolute tramp asked alms. 'Well,' said L——, 'if you will promise to get very drunk, here are five dollars.' 'I will,' said the tramp. This gentleman really applied a very good mind to making people evil. It is a long and complicated story. It ended in a singular fashion. He wrote two advertisements: 'Wanted, skilful or untrained young men willing to learn to steal.' 'Wanted, a few innocent young persons desirous of learning how, with profit and safety, to take human life by the use of poison. Persons already wicked need not apply. Terms low. Clergymen half-price. SATAN.' Naturally enough, these advertisements were declined. When at last he was examined with reference to placing his estate in commission, he defended himself with notable skill. When asked, 'Are you the devil?' he said, 'Yes.' 'Then why do you lead so exemplary a life? You pay your debts; you assist charities; you even go to church.' 'Yes,' he replied. 'You are very dull. When you good people want to be amused, you do something wicked; but when Satan desires variety and interest, he, of course, does something good. His personal business—my business—

is not sin. I have exhausted the Decalogue. Even I cannot invent new sins. I tempt others,' and so on."

"That is a fine idea," said St. Clair. "An insane Mephistopheles. It would make a good opera."

"I," said Mrs. Vincent, "dislike to see insanity set on the stage. 'Lear' I once saw. No more of that for me. What say you, Alice?"

"I am altogether of your opinion. The better the acting, the less I like it. Leontes, I mean in 'The Winter's Tale,' must be a most unpleasing part."

"Evidently," said I, "the dramatist meant to draw a portrait of insanity, the homicidal outcome of sudden jealousy. It is too abrupt in its onset. Nothing prepares the mind for his unreason."

"But what of Ophelia?" said Vincent.

To this I made answer: "I have an experience of insanity far beyond any possible to Shakespeare. I have seen two cases somewhat like that of Ophelia."

"I have often seen the part acted," said Clayborne, "but it always failed to move me. It does not ever seem a correct rendering. I find it difficult to explain myself. It is as with a picture, a portrait. We say, 'There is something wrong with it.' We cannot tell what it is. And yet, when I read the play I have not this feeling."

"Perhaps," said I, "I may help you. To act the rôle of an insane person so as to make it continuously gentle, prettily sentimental, is not to follow after nature. In one of the cases I referred to, a refined, sensitive woman sang sad love-songs and then became abruptly violent, wildly screaming some

tender sentiment; or at the close of a song that was serious would burst into laughter with the last line of the refrain. That is the way Ophelia ought to be acted."

"The trouble," said Vincent, "is that the great characters get so crusted about with stage traditions that freshly revised renderings become impossible, or at least they are so except in the case of actors made independent by genius, and that we have not on the stage to-day. We have stage artists, but not great actors. I think that never was the English stage so far from nature."

"There is," said St. Clair, "another trouble in our mode of dealing with great dramatic characters such as Hamlet, which are set for contrast against some other and different nature. Thus Hamlet is contrasted with the positive criminal decisiveness and sensual nature of the king. When the king's part is made weak by omissions the whole picture is damaged. We lose the background."

Said Vincent: "That is true. I was thinking lately of what a good case for a moot court would be Hamlet's. Was he insane? In a court to-day his mother's misbehavior and the fact of his uncle having been a murderer would, I fancy, be used as implying hereditary unsoundness."

"Ingenious, that," said Clayborne. "I should be a puzzled juryman."

Said my wife: "Are there many insane people in the other dramatic works of Shakespeare's day?"

No one could answer, and Sibyl said, with her not uncommon want of relevancy: "It is pleasant to

know so little of the man Shakespeare. We might have learned so much that one would not wish to credit."

"I like better," said I, "to know all of a man, the good and the bad."

"I am glad you do not," said St. Clair.

"Let me answer," said Vincent. "When one has a man's writings you have all that he meant you to know. Where a man is a soldier or sailor, a man of action, it is otherwise. A poet's poems are his actions. I have, too, an utter disbelief in biography. Usually its judgments, its omissions, and its editing, especially of letters, tell you more truth about the biographer than about the man of whom he writes."

"And autobiographies," said Clayborne, who had been unusually silent—"these must be untrue. Who can tell the truth about himself? Boswell is the only biographer; but his was the unlimited devotion of a life to a life, and he was also with delightful ingenuousness delineating James Boswell."

"If," said Vincent, "we were all to write, and then have type-written, our statement of our own characters, could we, who know one another well, pick them out and identify them?"

"None of that for me," cried St. Clair. "How would you do it?"

"Oh," said Sibyl, "I should make a list of moral and mental attributes. Each person should put a number under these in turn, say from one hundred to naught."

"It has been tried," said Vincent, "by a group of

clever people. They completely failed to identify their friends. There was amazing similarity. They seemed to be as much alike in mind and morals as are new-born babes."

"Oh, but they are very unlike," said my wife.

"Are they?" said I. "In Vienna once they took twelve babies of a month old, dressed alike or all undressed, I do not remember as to this. They tied an identifying number to each babe's foot and invited the mothers to pick out their own offspring. They failed sadly."

"I don't believe it," said my wife. "What a wicked experiment!"

We laughed at the maligned motherhood, and St. Clair turned to the piano, invitingly open. "I wonder," he said, "if Shakespeare could sing." He waited for no answer, but began to carol gaily to the air of "Drink to me only with thine eyes."

"Give me thy thoughts, thou gentle maid,
And I will lend them wings
To soar elate above the world
Of transitory things.

"Give me thy virgin dreams, and I
Will give their shyness song
Shall rise as with an angel's flight
That doth for heaven long.

Oh, I forget the rest. Is it not pretty?"

"Is it new or old?" said I.

He made no reply, but turning again to the piano,

said: "Here is what a long-forgotten poet said about old songs and new:

"A new song should be sweetly sung,
It goes but to the ear;
A new song should be sweetly sung,
For it touches no one near.
But an old song may be roughly sung;
The ear forgets its art,
As rises from the rudest tongue
The tribute to the heart.

"On tented fields 't is welcome still;
'T is sweet on the stormy sea,
In forests wild, on lonely hill,
And away on the prairie lea.
But dearer far the old song
When friends we love are nigh,
And well-known voices, clear and strong,
Ring out the chorus cry."

"How old-fashioned and simple!" said my wife. "Thanks—thank you."

As he ceased, Mrs. Vincent rose. "It is so pleasant to be once more together. Goodness, how you men have talked! I am weary with weight of new ideas. Come, Fred; it is late. We shall soon be on the wing. Let us all meet at Bar Harbor. You must come this time," she said to Clayborne. "Mr. St. Clair will promise, and stay away; but you—"

"I will come, and Sibyl."

"And I," said St. Clair, "if I may make love to Miss Mary."

Now, when all had left and Sibyl bade us good

night, I said: "Come into my study, Alice, and let us have a council. You may differ with me in what I am about to say, but—"

"Oh, there is nothing serious, I hope?" She was apprehensive; but no one I ever knew took with finer courage the ills of life, and no one had in peril such instant possession of all the qualities needed to meet disaster.

"No, no," said I. "It is only that I want to hold a council."

"A pity it is not a council of war," she cried, laughing. "That never fights, they say."

"You may fight, if you choose. I want to speak at length of Sibyl."

"Go on, Owen," she returned, sitting down.

"And hear me to the end." She was apt, as wives are, to anticipate conclusions when, in time grown familiar with the mode of thought of a life-comrade, they forecast what is as yet unsaid.

"I will listen," she replied. "We have grown to love her, and our dear little Mary adores her."

I held up a warning finger. "Sibyl is very loving, very emotional; is a too easy prisoner of sentiment, and, worse than all, is of nervous organization."

"And, practically, what does that amount to, Owen?"

"It means that she has a temperament the precise reverse of yours. Moreover, she is what people call nervous. She is apt to lose control of herself, to cry readily, to be subject to ungoverned excesses of mirth or grief. She lives too near the danger-line of loss

of power to discipline her emotions. It may sound absurd to say that such people are liable to moral anarchy. In other words, owing to temperament and ill health, she has been and may again be hysterical."

"But I thought you were more at ease as to her health?"

"I am at times; but, on the whole, I am not. She fluctuates strangely as to her physical state. Always she is gravely anemic."

"Is that all?"

"No. This is merely a doctor's opinion. There is more. No one can anticipate the extent to which the sensitiveness of hysteria may go. Undoubtedly this poor child allowed herself to care too much for our thoughtless man of genius."

"I considered that as over."

"A woman, and say that! Sibyl's every-day life has put it aside, seeing all the sad folly of it; but it is what I may call latent, like a great sorrow. We control with time the outward display of emotion. We know our loss to be complete, without hope, and still it abides with us, never to be forgotten; and how much it affects the future conduct of life depends upon the amount of reasoning self-control we see fit or are able to exercise. She has no trustworthy capacity to get out of disaster the good discipline it brings or may bring."

"And what next?"

"Ah, now comes the mystery. The mere presence of St. Clair affects her physically. When she sees him, or he is often with us, she becomes distinctly feebler in body. When he is absent she rises, so to

speak, but never to the level of full health. If she were really vigorous it might not be felt."

"I must say, Owen, that I had not observed this. I cannot understand it."

"Nor I; but it is true. I have seen men who, in some mysterious way, were injurious to persons of sensitive organization."

"But, Owen, is it not natural that a woman who has been forced to conceal and overcome a passion may suffer so as to be enfeebled in the presence of the object of what is a hopeless affection?"

"Perfectly true; but this seems to me more than that. I cannot be sure of my conclusion. I could not prove it; only to you can I speak of it; but I have the fancy that, even before this unhappy business, she was curiously influenced by St. Clair's presence. Understand me as speaking with doubt as to Sibyl's case. I have certainly seen cases where the mere presence of one person did seriously affect the health of another."

"But," said Alice, "if this idea once happened to possess the mind of a nervous person, might not that alone suffice in the future to give rise to a repetition of the imagined effect?"

"Very well put. Yes. But what would first suggest it? And the evil would be no less active. There is more than this. I have known a vigorous man who became—and much against his will—aware that in the presence of one other person, a woman he disliked, he was unaccountably weak. Suppose it to be a delusion. He had no other. He was a rather cold-blooded, selfish banker, very able; a man more apt to

hurt than to be hurt. I have known one other case where a man—a friend of mine, now dead—became so weak as to feel faint when a certain man was in the room. I had occasion to know that this person very much disliked my friend."

"What a dreadful idea, Owen! It is like the effect cats produce on certain people. You may remember my uncle John's case."

"Yes, I recall the fact. I have seen one other case. There are people," I added, "oh, only two or three, always women, who give me when they are present a very distinct discomfort, an uneasy sensation close to a sense of disgust, even of horror. Two are handsome, intelligent people, one is a general favorite."

"And you really think that Sibyl is physically affected, and disastrously, by the mere presence of Mr. St. Clair?"

"I am inclined to think so. I know of one case of a violent love-affair ending in an engagement to marry. It was broken, and years after I learned, not as a physician, that the woman came at last to feel that the man's presence seriously affected her health. This became so plain that she at last told him so. Then he said, in great distress, that this was the second time he had learned he was capable of injuring the health of a woman to whom he was attached. Both the man and the woman married other persons, and in neither instance was there any similar experience. There are several ways of accounting for these facts, but I am not going to treat you to a psychological treatise. I know of one case where, with return of health, all of this influence passed away completely;

and remember, dear, that the hysterical are curious instruments, and are emotionally susceptible as we are not."

"But what to do, Owen?"

"I think we must let Sibyl go to Bar Harbor. St. Clair will not remain there long. If she does not improve I shall talk frankly to Clayborne. He is, as we know, very much attached to her. I shall advise that he take her to Europe, and see what one of the iron spas will do for her. I shall, or I may, make this my sole excuse, but, aside from St. Clair, she is very ill. As to talking to Clayborne as I have done to you, it would be useless. And besides, there is more than enough in her bodily state to justify my alarm."

"Yes, that does seem the best course. She must go to Bar Harbor. Poor child! If I could only do something for her!"

"That, dear, is the sadness of life, to wait helpless. It does always seem as if love must contain resources."

"Owen, if ever people are hurtful to those they love,—a dreadful idea,—do not you think that others are like a strong tonic to the world they move in, and above all for those they love? I think so."

"Well, that is a happier thought to carry into sleep. I do believe it. I think also that if a man as affectionate as Victor ever came to have for Sibyl that which we call love both natures would prosper under its wholesome influence. But for this she would have to be a far more healthy woman."

"Oh, I could pray for that, Owen."

"Let us leave it all just here, Alice. Good night."

'Good night. Oh, what was it Clayborne read to us last summer? You were away. I mean something about good night. Wait; I shall get it. When I want to recall a thing I seem to sit like a cat at a mouse-hole. Presently it comes out, and I have it. Ah, this was it. It was from his favorite poet, Attar. 'Say not good night. Say rather thou good-by, for thou shalt sail in sleep upon a sea which all men travel and which no man knows; to-morrow thou wilt come again to port, as from a strange country.'"

"Good night," I cried as she went, "and not good-by."

I sat down with my cigar, revolving many things in my mind, until I stumbled over some problems which are bad preparations for sleep. Then I went to bed.

I had found it a relief to speak out to my wife as to Sibyl. I should have hesitated to be as frank to others. It is hard to defend a belief so eccentric.

Sibyl, at my desire, remained with us for the few weeks after Clayborne's return and until we went to Maine. Her health continued uncertain, but never had she seemed to me more interesting.

It was near to the close of May, and we were gathered about the open bow-window at Holmwood after a pleasant dinner. St. Clair lay on the piazza floor, with his head on a cushion. There had been one of the long periods of silence so natural to people as intimate as we. Presently something occurred to St. Clair. He said: "If you are not all sound asleep, I will tell you something curious about the great bear Xerxes."

We at once announced our curiosity.

"I had a letter from him last week. Not a word about our row. He asked for the addresses of my two friends who were ruined by his partner. Guess what I answered."

Said Vincent: "You answered, 'Too late.'"

Mrs. Vincent said: "You sent them."

I said nothing.

Clayborne laughed. "You made no reply."

"And, Miss Maywood," asked St. Clair, sitting up and looking at her, "what do you say that I said?"

It is absurd to pretend to read faces as do the wonderful folk in novels, for commonly people do not watch the features of their fellows; but to do this is a part of the daily life of my profession. Was there in St. Clair's face and tones a slight expression of anxiety?

"You wrote," she replied, "that it was not necessary, as they had been helped by others, and would not in any case take alms of unjustly earned money."

"By George!" cried St. Clair. "I did. Not in those very words, but just that. Who told you?"

"No one. Why should any one tell me? I did not say you were right."

"Was I not?"

"I do not think you were."

"Nor I," said Mrs. Vincent, perhaps thinking Sibyl's frankness undesirable.

"I wonder," said Mrs. North, "if his wife is really making this man better, and if this be some of the fruit. Or was it spontaneous? As to these especial cases, for which, as I understand, Mr. Crofter was not

directly responsible—as to these she could not know, that is, unless he is more confiding than some people I might name."

"Thanks, madam," I said. "Never was I more convinced of my own domestically applied wisdom."

"You get off easy," laughed St. Clair. "I am a daily victim, all about my promised indulgences quite forgotten."

"There was a certain story," said Mrs. Vincent, "also promised. Perhaps, now, you might—"

"Tell it. Surely. You are like a child about stories." Indeed, this was true.

"Oh, do," she said; "but, first, why do you go on cultivating this man's enmity?"

"Ah," he answered, "it is easy to ask questions. I obey my nature. If I had replied sweetly I should have done myself a wrong. Better to make an enemy of another than to make an enemy of yourself."

"Would you kindly repeat that wisdom?" laughed Vincent. "It sounds so proverbial. No? Well, then, what of your story?"

"Yes, let us have it," we said.

"Well, once on a time I ran my canoe on to the beach at Muskrat Bluff, on the north shore of Lake Superior. I had paddled up of a calm day from Temperance River, seeing nor man nor boat. By the way, that river was so named by an early voyageur because it has no bar at the mouth. This is true, please. It was pretty cool at evening, and I went up a rough way to the half-dozen houses on the bluff to ask a supper. I fell into company with a big, handsome German about thirty-five years old. He was

clearly an educated man, and proved interesting. Then there was the most magnificent woman."

"I have been expecting her," said I. "Enter Diana."

"Bother! She was glorious. Next day I told her husband that she was splendid. He liked it. Some men do not. Then I said, 'She is an American; where in this wilderness did you find her?' This man said, 'Sit down, and all of it I will tell you. It is a tale.

"'My two uncles came here a long while ago and have bought pine lands and made a mill. After they got to be rich they wrote out to me to come here from Stettin, where we lived. I came. They said, "We are rich. We will not marry. We want a young woman up here. Go and get married." I said, "How?" They said, "It is here all so easy. You put in the 'Tribune' of Chicago an advertisement." Well, it seemed easy, and they did say every one did it, and there was no need to take any that offered.

"'So we made it up this way: "A young man which is of good appearance and will have of money enough wants to marry. Answer to Muskrat Bluff, Minnesota." We ourselves were all there was of Muskrat Bluff. Indians don't count. It took a month to get news from Chicago. At last the canoe we sent to Duluth came back. There were two pecks of letters. The old fellows went into it in business fashion. Most were fakes, I guess. One was, "We are a boarding-school. We accept." Some sent photographs. At last Uncle Karl says, "Here she is," and there was a photograph of my wife what is now, and a nice letter

to say that if I was handsome and a Protestant and loved music to come to Freeburg, Ohio, and settle things.

"'So next day I took the letter and the picture and went up to the head of the lake, and so to Freeburg, a big travel. It was night when I arrived. I went to the hotel. After supper I asked a little if Miss Easterday was to any known. So then it seemed she taught a public school. I had the good notion to say I came to get a schoolmistress for another town. All they I asked hoped she would not go. Next day, after time of school, I went to see her. She had a room in the hotel, and a little room also next, where I was bid to come. The piano was going. I stayed to hear. Ach, not Uncle Karl plays better! Then she sang "Der Erl König." Himmel, what a voice, and in German! When I went in I, that am a big man, felt small. But you have seen her, and it is nine years ago, this. When she said to sit and what was it that she could do for me, I felt a fool; but then she had written I was to come. I said, "Fräulein, I have here my advertisement and your letter, and here your photograph, beyond which you are more beautiful." Then she got red and then pale, and said, "What foolishness is this? This is I, but I wrote no letter, and this is not my hand, nor even like it. Here is a note of mine. See, see!"

"'Himmel, I saw! I could have fallen down. I said, "Some one has played a cruel trick on you and me. Who was it?" She did not know. What could I say? I apologized so ill in English, which then I badly did know, that she said to speak in German.

Ach, she spoke it well! I went away down-stairs; I went very slow. I was in love. I was angry. I went again to-morrow to say how sorry I was. When she said it must be a man that wrote, I asked, "Who?" She turned very red and would say no more. After that I said to me, "This is a man that she would not listen to." That night I talked about the schoolmistress and what a fine salary she would have in the new school. By and by one man, a preacher, said the editor of their newspaper wanted to marry her, but she was hard to please. I got it in my head he was the man that has put a trick on me. I saw that man. He was little and I am not. I scared him so that he owned up. I made that man sit down and say he was sorry on paper. I what you call edited him. Then I took it to her. She said I was a man. Well, I stayed on, and the end was I got married and took her home. And the school is getting on now. There are four scholars in our school. That 's how it came about.'"

"A very pretty story," said Mrs. Vincent. "Thank you."

"And true," said the narrator.

Then, to our amusement, through the deepening gloom came the strong voice of Clayborne. During the narration he had been walking on the porch, where we sat, and was carefully nursing with economical puffs the failing fires of his big meerschaum pipe. He gave no warning, but began in a sententious manner:

"Once on a time there were in Bagdad one hundred and twenty-three tellers of tales; also there were

seventy-three apprentices learning the business. The caliph said: 'These fellows are tiresome and prey on the faithful. For a year they shall be shut up in the courtyard of the Mosque of Gubmuh and tell their tales to one another, for it is said that one teller of tales will not willingly listen to the tales of another. Thus shall the weary be avenged and the faithful have repose.' As the caliph ordered, all the tellers of tales were gathered out of the bazaars and the baths and shut up in the Mosque of Gubmuh. For a while a great noise went up to heaven, and in all Persia the faithful had rest from them that are the fathers of lies. At the end of a year the court fool besought pardon for the few who were yet alive in the mosque. Then the Ever-Merciful sent forth these gray of head and tale-tired, assured that they would now have one new tale to tell."

We greeted the parable joyously, but the scholar, declaring it was not of his own, would not tell whence it came.

St. Clair, laughing, said: "It is pretty true. I have seen many tellers of tales, we will say novelists, who never read novels."

"I can understand that," said Vincent. "Thornhill told me that in a train a man who hawked books offered him one of his own novels. Thornhill said, 'A poor book.' 'No, sir,' said the vender; 'I have read that book myself; it is a fine book.' The writer assured him that, having read it at least a score of times, he knew better. Then, seeing the young fellow's perplexed look, he said, 'The fact is, I wrote it.' 'Good gracious! sir, when a man writes a book

does he have to read it twenty times?' 'I do,' said Thornhill."

"His books," said my wife, "show the care he takes. He told me that after a book was written he kept it in manuscript two years before he allowed it to appear in print."

"Wise man," said Clayborne, "but he might be wiser."

"For shame!" cried Mrs. Vincent. "But I have no time to defend him. And now I must go home."

XXII

PEOPLE who play hard do not always work hard; but they who work hard, if they play at all, are apt to play hard. Clayborne could not play, and knew not how to be agreeably idle, which is also a fine art. Neither did he incline to any exercise except riding the horse, and even this he did not do because he liked it. For these reasons we awaited his arrival at Bar Harbor with some amused doubt as to how we should occupy pleasantly this powerful intellectual machine.

The Vincents and ourselves had been from mid-June in two adjacent farm-houses, which we had contrived to make comfortable. St. Clair was to appear at some indefinite future time. Clayborne meant, on his way north, to give Sibyl her first sight of Niagara. After that we hoped to induce him to make a long stay with us. I found a quiet horse which would carry his weight, and then dismissed the matter. The two women discussed it at greater length. I overheard a little of this talk.

Said Anne Vincent: "We must feed him well. He does eat what they call here 'powerful much.'"

"And," said Alice, "he must not read his eyes sore."

"Yes. And he must be amused. But how?"

"Who must be amoosed?" said Miss Mary.

"Mr. Clayborne, dear."

"I will amoose him," said the child; and she did, devoting herself quite conscientiously to the task.

They arrived that evening, having driven over from Southwest Harbor. I was shocked at Sibyl's appearance. She was very pale, and had an unpleasant waxen look. After the usual greetings she was sent, not unwillingly, to bed. When, later in the evening, we had a little chance to question Clayborne, he said they had met St. Clair at Niagara. "He had some queer notion as to the curves of the human form resembling those of water. He was photographing the rapids, and was full of this idea."

"How long were you there?" said I.

"Two days alone," he replied, and then St. Clair had been with them.

"How did Sibyl like Niagara?" I asked.

"Not at all. It seemed to terrify and yet to attract her. Indeed, I could not comprehend the child. At first she would only look at it from a distance; then she went nearer and paused; and then again nearer and paused. At last she stood still on the brink, saying strange things about it, and very soon desired to go away."

"The climate at Niagara does not suit every one," said I.

"No; Sibyl felt it, or said as much. Then St. Clair came; and, after a few days, I was sure I must take her to some other place."

My wife glanced at me as he ceased. "We shall make her well here," she said.

The following afternoon Alice informed me that Mr. Clayborne had brought two immense trunks full of books. "You may laugh," she added; "but where are they to be put—would the upper hall do?"

"My dear, I decline hostile interpretation of my mirth. The more books, the more easily will Clayborne entertain Clayborne. He is in other hands at present. Mary discovered him on the porch, deep in a volume of Shaftesbury on wit. I tried it once. It is a melancholic essay."

Our friend had brought out a half-dozen books. I never yet could discover why he read this or that book. My young lady tried one or two in hope of pictures. "Sparkles of Glory, by John Saltmarsh [fine name], Preacher of the Gospel," was her final effort. At last she succeeded in attracting the scholar's attention, inquiring if that was a nice book for girls. Clayborne said it was not. Then the true purpose of my diplomatist appeared. I heard her say:

"My mama says I am to amoose you evewy day."

"Goodness! you mite, and how?"

"You come wis me."

He went. They were soon building corn-cob palaces under the big apple-tree.

It proved a pleasant alliance. "Alice North," he said, "I have discovered that in the growth of a child it passes through the stages which mark the upward progress of humanity. Mary is now in the stone age. We have a cave on the shore. I feel like getting the loan of a baby, and studying it from this point of view."

"I would," said Mrs. Vincent. "I can send you a variety of orphans, all sizes, all colors, warranted barbarians."

When we discovered that he also took kindly to the monotony of deep-sea fishing, we felt more at ease.

Much relieved, Vincent said to me: "And now I trust that we shall have an uneventful summer."

"We shall," I said, "unless St. Clair should discover events, as is probable enough."

I look back upon this summer as one of great happiness. Here were two married couples, alike only in their entire comprehension of what is needed to make marriage the perfect bond of noble natures. There are households in which the best qualities of heart and mind are so fitly joined together in a partnership of high aims and dutiful industries as to give at last a sense of that oneness of life which realizes the true conception of marriage. If to such an alliance you grant well-earned friendships and definite pursuits, rewarded by competence sufficient to allow of power to give generously and to indulge tastes which refine, and then such leisure as keeps strong the muscles of mind and body, you have that ideal life which for years was enjoyed by the two households I am now discussing.

To this group were added the rugged nature, vast attainments, and interior tenderness of the great scholar, the genius and impulsive nature of St. Clair, and now the puzzling but attractive individuality of the young woman whom Clayborne had brought into relation with all of us.

We were most happy when, as in summer, we were

all together. Then, although away from a larger social world which she liked and keenly enjoyed, Anne Vincent was at her best. She could be heard at any hour of the day singing with the affluent ease of a bird. She knew and helped the Indians in their summer camp on the island. She learned from them, and taught little Mary, to make baskets. She cultivated a wild garden, fetched the side-saddle plants and orchids from the swamps, and showed Mary the savage trap the *Drosera* set for gnats. It was a full life, and supremely capable of diffusing joy. My wife's quick wit and her sagacious critical power added a large intellectual charm, felt even by the somewhat despotic mind of the historian, and respected even when she failed, as sometimes chanced, to be able to explain or defend her conclusions. Mrs. Vincent was in a large way charitable, but did not find agreeable close relations with the poor. Alice met them with a certain respectful tenderness so delicately fine as always to preserve her helpfulness from seeming intrusive. Here in the summer she had, as at home, needy people who humbly adored this ever-gracious woman.

Then, also, we profited—when he chose to appear—by St. Clair's amiable charm and large knowledge of art, and by his many social gifts; the weightier interest of Clayborne's cyclopedic memory and Sibyl's quaintly acting intelligence contributing their share of companionable interests. Thus humanly provided, we took up our summer life of walking, sailing, canoeing, fishing, music, and talk. Some of its memories are worth recalling.

Sibyl, improving again in health, was at her best, and was full of her surprising talk. I chanced one day to ask how she liked Niagara. She replied that it kept her in a state between terror and adoration, as one might feel when face to face with some mighty spirit of another world. It did seem to her as if here the silent earth had found a voice. It seemed to say:

"Come, come. You are a part of me. Come now."

"And I did want to come, to leap into the turmoil of those waters. I fear that I alarmed the master."

I looked at her steadily. The talk seemed to renew the emotion described in so wild a way.

"Is that temptation to leap over unusual?" she said. "I heard of one woman who looked down at the cataract, and then ran away until she fell exhausted."

"No, it is not rare," I said; "but, to be honest, my dear Sibyl, you have at times a tendency to energetic statement. All this jejune stuff about mother earth sounds a good deal like St. Clair."

"Oh, it was he who said it," she returned; "but I felt it. He often says what I feel. It does not sound foolish to me."

When thus she spoke we were near the foot of Newport Mountain. Any higher ascent was forbidden her by the excessive fatigue, or rather exhaustion, to which exercise gave rise. Clayborne was wandering among the trees, having declined to go up the hill with my wife and the Vincents. As we talked, Sibyl was lying on a bed of moss, with her animated face set against the impassive sternness of the gray rock behind her.

"Is it natural?" she said—"this impulse?"

"Well, the mere impulse is common, and perhaps one may therefore admit that it is a part of one's nature; if of original or acquired nature I do not know. But," I said, "to answer you further, all men and women have at times unwholesome possibilities. The origin of this one I cannot trace. Danger allures many minds. 'The marge of peril 's sweet.' But danger does not always involve the distinct idea of an end to earthly hope. This does. The wholesome-minded do not want to die."

"No, no," she replied. "And yet, as death is natural, may not this half-felt desire be a relic of something educated out of us by generations of control, by the despotism of long-held beliefs? Does not a passing train, a stormy sea, a loaded pistol, give us the same mingled desire and fear?"

I glanced at the beautiful face with its marble pallor. "The thought is not a wholesome guest, Sibyl. I think it is no latent desire to die that prompts to leap from a height. *Délire des hauteurs* the French call it; but this helps us to understand as little as labels generally do. Certainly there are present the fear of falling and the strange temptation to fall."

"But sometimes the impulse to do that which must result in death overcomes the conservative instinct."

"Yes. Well stated."

"I had it until I feared to stay. I think it inexplicable."

"Perhaps it is. Children do not have it. I laughed, but it was surely a weird idea of St. Clair's, that

this mighty voice of Niagara is the hoarse call of mother earth, eager to reclaim her children."

"And I did want to say, 'Yes, I am here. I come. Take me.'"

"Hush!" I said. "That is not wise."

"I know it. But is n't it sometimes a relief to be foolish?"

"Yes; but not to toy with follies which are playing the dance of death. You are not one to trifle with the abnormal."

"No, that is true. I know it well."

"We have had a most unsatisfactory talk," said I. "Eternity is less familiar and not more astounding to me than the complexity, the boundless products, of our moral and mental mechanisms. There are times when I seem to hang awed over the abyss of my own mind, with wonder near akin to terror. That out of this world of thought, feelings, and memories should come, to the most healthy nature, at times inexplicable desires, moments of unreason, impulses which defy analytic research, even brief insanities, is not strange to me. I wonder, indeed, at the permanence of mental health, even at the marvel of bodily soundness, at the myriad automatisms, balanced, interregulated, preservative; how this checks that, and that this; how, to fractions of a degree, temperatures remain the same from pole to equator. But this is all commonplace. If Hamlet wondered, we have even greater cause to wonder."

She seemed to hesitate a little, and then said:

"It is anything but commonplace to me. Pray go on. I am really interested. I was thinking of

what my cousin said last week. It was not quite like his usual thought. He said: 'If I, the man, could have a talk with my boy self, as he or I once was, I do not think I should recognize myself in him.' Then he said: 'If the boy could see what manner of man he would become at seventy, how much more would he be astonished to find himself the same and yet not the same.'"

"It might not be pleasant, Sibyl. Curiously enough, I was on the point of speaking of individuality. I mean of the amazing way in which every man remains a thing apart from every other man, with constant conformity to type. It is seen in all life to the lowest nomad. Years ago, before we knew you, we talked a long while about this question."

"My cousin has mentioned it more than once lately; he told me you had said that even the rattlesnakes in your laboratory were different in character one from another. One was brave, one timid; one had a good memory, one had not."

"I recall the discussion. But if no two leaves are the same, no two cells in their structure exactly alike, we need feel no surprise that in the whole range of existence the individuality of the creature is even more securely preserved than is the continuity of specific forms. As this differentiation is marked in man, so in fact is it in every sun or star. Each is distinct, and no two created things from nomad to planet are identically the same. I remember, Sibyl, that when we had reached this point my old friend stopped us with a strange question."

"Oh, dear Dr. North, what was it? He does puzzle me at times."

"What he first said was that civilized man was endlessly engaged in efforts to produce complete identity of product, just the opposite of the constant effort of nature."

"Yes, I see," said Sibyl, quickly. "To make needles or pins alike, to make watches or engines so as to deprive the thing made of individuality."

"Yes," I went on; "but although he practically succeeds, he still fails, even in machines, to secure unassailable identity."

"It is a curious thought," said Sibyl. "What was the question asked?"

"Let me see," said I, "if I can state it. 'If individuality be a universal quality of all things in the universe as we see it, does not this imply individuality in the Creator, and therefore oneness?' I said, not of necessity, but Vincent took the other side, while St. Clair promptly remembered an engagement, and left us deep in a noble battle which has had no end."

As I spoke, Clayborne, reappearing from the deeper woods around us, asked of what we were talking.

"Oh, we were diving deep," said Sibyl, gaily.

"We were," said I, "discussing the universality of the law of individual differences. I was keeping for you two questions: If no two things we see are identical, neither is it likely that any two ultimate molecules or atoms are the same, despite the belief attained by our physical investigations."

"That is a bold thought. It would mean that a

[illegible] specimens of pure iron, for example, would differ [illegible] think it over. What is the other question?"

"That may wait."

"Very good. Come, Sibyl," he said, giving her his hand. "Come with me. It is not far. I want to show you what the ice-chisel and -plane have done. I will show you where the granite rocks record the giant march of the glaciers and their alterative effect on the earth's surface."

By and by we stood with him on one of these graven slabs.

"Poor old earth," said Sibyl, looking down at the deep furrows which the slowly moving ice had plowed in the stone.

As she spoke I was aware of a man in gray knickerbockers. He had a well-bronzed face, which neatly framed large eyes of deep blue. His hair was curly. He uncovered as he spoke—a man of forty years, I fancied.

"Pardon me," he said. "I am off the trail. I have lost my way in coming down."

"It is here to the left," said I.

As he spoke I recalled him to mind. I remember voices well, faces badly, and those vexing labels, names, scarce at all.

"It is Afton," said I.

"What! Owen North! How delightful to see you!"

"Miss Maywood," said I, "Mr. Clayborne: an old acquaintance, Dr. Afton."

The doctor bowed to Miss Maywood, and shook

hands with the historian, saying, "It is very pleasant to meet a man with whose thoughts one has been long familiar, to meet him face to face."

"But apt to disappoint," said Clayborne, "or at least I have found it so."

"Naturally," said Afton. "Talk is the child of the minute, a book the adult of thoughtful hours."

"Let us," said I, "go back to our rocks and sit down. We are waiting for friends who have gone up Newport Mountain."

"I met them," said Afton. "Two handsome women and a man with character in his face writ plain."

"One is his wife," said I, "one is mine."

We sat down.

"Indeed! You are to be congratulated no matter which one it may be."

"But you, too, are married."

"I was. My wife has been dead these many years, and I have been a rolling stone ever since."

"Pardon me," said I. "Are you staying here?"

"Yes, in a farm-house, and I am very comfortable except that my host is named Afton. I dislike that. I have a distinct and ridiculous prejudice against strangers who own my name. I feel it to be a liberty."

"Ah!" laughed Sibyl, "I like it. It seems a compliment."

Dr. Afton glanced at her, briefly curious.

"You must come and see us," I said. "When last we met—it was years ago—you were what you called a character doctor."

"Oh, indeed!" said Clayborne. "Now I remember.

North told us about you. I was interested in some of your papers."

"Does it seem to you, Miss Maywood, an odd business?" asked Afton.

"No; Dr. North told me of it once. It must have been an absorbing occupation."

"I gave it up. It became quite too absorbing. For most of my patients it proved practically valueless."

"Indeed!" said Miss Maywood. "Why should that have been?"

"I certainly had some capacity to read character, but when you present a man with a true picture of himself he no more believes it is he himself than does a monkey who first sees himself in a mirror."

"Oh, yes," she cried. "What a terrible thing an honest moral mirror would be! Dreadful to see ourselves, even 'as in a glass darkly.'"

"Sibyl, Sibyl," said Clayborne, "be careful of your quotations. I suppose the feminine mind turns instinctively to mirrors. You mean to quote, 'For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face.' And don't misapply quotations. Of course it should read, not a glass, but a mirror. The word 'through' puzzled me until I chanced to have an antique metal mirror repolished. Then I saw that not only did it reflect darkly, but also that the image seemed to be remote, as if seen through something. St. Paul was a good observer."

"Even with your statement," I said, "the translation, or the comparison if the translation be correct, is not satisfactory."

"Yes," returned Clayborne. "Whether it means

that we shall see our own self-reality, long masked on earth, or shall have a larger view of all things, I am not clear."

"Once," said Afton, "in the delirium of a fever, I saw myself facing me. It was most unpleasant. I was a huge, magnified figure, with, as it seemed to me, all my worst qualities featured on my face. I cried out in my terror to the thing to go away. It said, 'How can a man depart from himself? I will shrink and go back to you, whence I came.'"

"How dreadful!" cried Sibyl. "That might appall the saintliest soul."

"If the text means that it is our truer selves we are to see, one likes," said Afton, "to take refuge in the next verse, that, of those things which abide, hope is one, and to feel also that when we see ourselves face to face the charity of the great Maker will be also there."

"Thank you," said Sibyl; "and now let me ask you, if I may, was there no value in the work you did as a character doctor?"

"Yes; my most useful errand," said Afton, "was in advising as to peculiar children. It is they who are most likely to develop original powers, and it is they who are the most apt to be injured by the procrustean system of schools. There should be a psychological consultant for schools. True education considers individuality. Teachers rarely do that or can do that."

At this time the Vincents and my wife appeared through the trees. Afton was duly presented. Sibyl was set on her pony, and we walked homeward. Afton soon fell into chat with Vincent about the East,

which Vincent talked of visiting. After a cordial invitation to call on us, we left the doctor at the village and continued on our homeward way.

The evening after this encounter we were seated on the porch, saying little and watching the colors fade from the hills of the mainland. Clayborne was reading, indifferent to sunsets.

"Anne," exclaimed Vincent, "you will be glad to hear that Dr. Afton will call this evening. I met him in the village to-day. To my amusement, he asked who was a man named Crofter. He had met him while walking. I said merely that he was a rich man from the West. Then Afton said he was here in his yacht."

"The *Night Hawk*," growled Clayborne, looking up from his book. "I thought that here we were insured against such vermin."

"What can bring him here?" queried my wife.

"Probably to call on you," said I.

"Owen," she said with affected gravity, "there are some subjects too serious for jest. This is one. Do you propose asking the man to dine with us?"

"Oh, if you would!" said Mrs. Vincent.

"More strange things have happened," said Vincent, "but this seems improbable."

"How could it come about?" said my wife. "If I put you all on an imagination committee of ways and means, you could not dream me a possibility of this."

"A perilous illustration, my dear. Dreams involve queer possibilities, and, after all, everything is possible to audacity and money. Given a man of certain means and an uncertain past, give him, say, fifty mil-

lions of dollars, and, with time, decent manners, and the chances of life, he will break through at least the outer barriers of any society."

"I often wonder," said Clayborne, "how the children of the great robbers of finance regard their inherited plunder. Even if they know all that can be known, are themselves honest and incapable of the greed of accumulation, what can they do? Restitution is impossible."

"Not altogether," said Alice; "but who ever heard of it as having been made? The children of the robber would admit his guilt by such restitution."

"I knew," said Vincent, "a great scamp who cheated a number of people and, at last, his partner. I acted for him in the only just lawsuit he ever had. He lost it. I was very young. He came to me later about a very scaly business. I refused to help him. When he died he surprised every one by leaving me, 'for reasons known to me' (so ran his will), ten thousand dollars. I was very clear about it, and so, too, was Anne Vincent. I could not keep it. I offered these ill-gotten gains to the partner he had cheated. He said, 'No.'"

Upon this my wife remarked: "I am sure Anne took it for those all-devouring orphans."

"Yes, I did; and I wish Xerxes would leave Fred a million."

"Please not, my dear, indiscreet Fate," said Vincent, smiling. "That might not turn out as well. The answer to limitless temptation is not always easy."

"Not for all men," said Anne Vincent, proudly.

"When," said I, "I was a boy, we used to be served with butter, chickens, nuts, and apple-butter by a farmer. He insisted on being paid every week. When asked to render an account once a month he said, 'No. I guess I am week-honest. I don't know as I am month-honest.' He guessed he was n't goin' to experiment none with his conscience."

"That million, say five, twenty millions, might it not alter the case?" It was Clayborne who asked, smiling.

"Not for Fred Vincent," said Anne, coldly, disliking even the discussion of such a question.

"No, by George!" said Clayborne.

"Ah," laughed Vincent, "I like others to have boundless confidence in me. It is a very good tonic. And suppose, Owen, I were abruptly to do some immoral thing, to lie largely, to steal in some way, to contradict the monotony of the decently straight life, what would you say?"

"Say? I should say that in your case it was the beginning of insanity. In the cases of most of the men who thus go wrong, the previous life has been a long concealment of lesser crime. I am a believer in the despotism of moral habits. I do not think that a man who has lived a life of rectitude since boyhood does ever become abruptly base or fraudulent."

"I wish," said Anne Vincent, "you would choose some other human example of wicked possibilities than Fred Vincent."

"You may take me," said I.

"Unless I, too, object," cried Alice.

"I have been reflecting," said Clayborne, "that if some robber willed me his evilly gotten gains I would accept them and keep them, and use them as I would any other product of lucky accident. Certainly I should not give them away in bulk and at once. As to what Owen says I agree. Sudden financial or other baseness in a high-minded man is as improbable as the display of refined honor in the habitually base. Habit is the best moral legislator."

"Ah, here comes our character doctor," said I. "I was about to ask whether there is not, should not be, a statute of limitations as to the punishment of iniquities like those of Xerxes."

"For shame," said my wife.

"But there is, there must be," said Clayborne, persistently.

"Shall a man never forgive himself?" laughed Afton, as we welcomed him. "He usually does, even to seventy times seven."

"You are both unpleasantly confusing," said my wife, "and you know it, too."

"Yes, we do," cried Afton, as he accepted a cigar and sat down to talk with Mrs. Vincent. During a pause I heard her say, "You saw Mr. Xerxes Crofter, I think, Dr. Afton."

"Yes, I mentioned having met him. We met by odd chance on the top of Dry Mountain. I went up a rough way not very good for timid climbers. I sat down under a rock shelter to get out of the wind, and found I had lost my pipe. After a little I saw a big man come up the same way. He looked hot, and his clothes had suffered in the ascent. As I lay flat be-

hind a rock amid the berry-bushes, he did not see me. He sat down only a few feet away. I could see his side face. I set myself to study him. Who was he, and what? How often one does this when traveling! He took out a gold cigar-case and then a gold match-box. He said, 'Damn that fellow! Not a match. If he does it again out he goes.' I said to myself, 'He is rich, hard, luxurious, has many servants.' He tried a dry smoke. He looked over the great hills and away up the valley cloven by ice long ago. He looked past Bubble Pond and Eagle Lake through to the cleft where the sun was setting in mists of scarlet and gold on the distant bay. It seemed not to interest him. He took out a bulky pocket-book and a pencil, and appeared to be absorbed in calculations. I had seen enough. I said, 'May I offer you a match?' It would have startled me. He turned tranquilly, and said, 'Will I? You bet,' as he came over and sat down by me. He smoked for a minute before it occurred to him to offer me a cigar. Then we talked. He said he knew you—I mean Mr. Vincent and the doctor. I fancy he means to call on you."

"Indeed!" said my wife.

"I found him interesting. I know nothing of his history, except that he is perilously rich. He thought he would buy the island, and build a rail-road and a big hotel."

"And what else?" said I.

"A character undergoing modification; a man in a new country, making intelligent discoveries. The vigorous intellect may remain late in life valuably receptive of novel ideas."

"That is, mentally," said Vincent; "certainly not as to morals?"

"I am not sure as to that. In your profession it is not rare to see the unscrupulous lawyer when he has won money and success begin to hanker after respectability and become, as to obvious conduct, careful and scrupulous."

"Yes; I have seen that. How deep it goes I do not know."

"Oh, the longer it lasts the deeper it goes," continued Afton. "The man gets into a rut of good behavior. Some cause or causes must be at work to change this strong animal, I saw that plainly. He is making new habits. What is the motive, or what are the motives?"

"A woman, a wife," said Anne Vincent. "Wives are great alteratives for good or ill. The woman he married, or who married him, is a well-bred lady. She was a widow without a penny. She has two boys whom she was struggling to educate. One, who is about fourteen, took a prize in a school for manual training. The prize was given by Mr. Crofter. He saw the mother, and was easily captured. I heard all this last month. I should like to see the man."

"You will, I fancy. He is crude, rather coarse, humorous in an excessive way, free-handed—has suddenly discovered that money can buy certain agreeable things. He told me that he had found out—oh, he is queerly frank—he had found out that it was pleasant to have people like you. He spoke as if he had made a discovery and meant to invest in affection. I fancy him to have been previously given over to money-

making, and as enjoying the game to the utter exclusion of all the gentlenesses of life."

"That is nearly true," said I.

"He would terrify me like Niagara," said Sibyl. "But I can understand the woman's marrying him."

"I cannot," said Mrs. Vincent.

"You have a right to be puzzled," said Afton. "It could not have been a marriage of mere selfish interest. These big, strong, bold men remind me in their power and amorality of the resistless forces of nature, of a cyclone, of a cataract, of a glacier."

"He himself spoke once of men of his kind as being like glaciers," remarked Clayborne.

"They attract certain women," said Afton. "I should guess Mrs. Crofter to be a slight, refined woman, with gentle ways, and probably with a sturdy basis of character."

"Yes, that is all true," said Anne Vincent, "except that she is stout."

"That is incidental and unimportant. She has," he added, "a rather large mouth, full lips—"

"Good gracious! Yes!" exclaimed Mrs. Vincent. "I shall be afraid of you. How do you know her mouth to be large?"

"And well formed."

"How do you guess that?"

"How? I have seen him. He will have to behave himself. While we are on this subject, may I tell you a long story?"

"We adore long stories," said my wife.

"Well, this is a queer one. It illustrates a different type from that of Mrs. Xerxes. The man was of

Crofter's tribe—a variation of the type. He made a great fortune suddenly by taking for a debt a patent supposed to be of small value. Then he married a pretty woman without means of her own. She was deeply in love with him. I may add that, unlike the man Xerxes, he was singularly handsome. He soon began to distribute his affection and his money. The woman was jealous and passionate. At last she became hysterical—the mental type of hysteria, North. Her suspicions went far beyond his misdeeds. When, after some brief unfaithfulness, he returned to reclaim the affection of his wife, he was made to understand that love is not eternal or pardon an unlimited quantity. The woman was becoming dangerous. Then he came to me. He was very frank, and I equally frank. As he was in a penitent mood, he promised everything. I suppose he told his wife he had seen me, and she was taken with the idea. At all events, she came to see me. But I am relating a long story."

We begged him to continue.

"I found the woman pleasant, well-mannered—much the superior of the man. She, too, told me her history. I said he had pledged himself to decent behavior. 'It will not last long,' she said. 'I can tell at once when he is going astray. I am fond of photography. Last week he looked over some fancy photographs I made of a pretty girl, a dressmaker of mine whom I use as a model. I saw at once he was captured. Yesterday I missed the pictures. I have stood it pretty long. I cannot go on much longer. Life is valueless. I have no child, no ties but this

one. Let him take care.' I looked at the woman's face and read a danger-signal. He soon gave her fresh cause to be jealous. A few weeks later she asked him to go to a photographic shop and buy her certain drugs, among them one much used by photographers—the cyanide of potassium, a swift and deadly poison. The day after he had brought her the photographic materials, she mailed a note to me, and then went to bed, stating that she had a headache. She next prepared a glass of water, dissolved in it a large quantity of cyanide of potassium, and set it beside her bed. When her husband came home he heard that she was ill, and went to her room. She said: 'Get me some magnesia. It is in my bathroom.' When he returned with it, she asked him to put a teaspoonful of this medicine in the glass of water. He did so. She said to her maid: 'Do not go out yet.' When he turned to hand her the glass, he said: 'Stop; it has a queer smell. Let me taste it.' As he set the glass to his lips, she cried out, 'No, no,' struck the glass from his hand, and fell back in hysterics. Her own doctor could not be found, and I was sent for. Her husband told me what had occurred. The overturned glass smelled strongly of cyanide. It has the familiar odor of bitter almonds or peach-kernels. I felt that he ought to see her letter to me. It said very little, except that she was unhappy and was firmly convinced that some day her husband would poison her. She added: 'Be sure to keep this letter.' She became maniacal after a long illness, and ended her sad life in an asylum. The dregs of the fluid were analyzed, and the result justi-

fied my belief in the presence of an enormous dose of one of the deadliest poisons known to man."

"What a diabolical plot!" said Clayborne. "I cannot see how he could have escaped. A man buys poison, apparently gives it in the maid's presence, and the woman leaves on record a statement that her husband meant to poison her. His infidelities, which were well known, complete the links of motives. He would probably have been hanged."

"What became of him?" said my wife.

"He married again, and was kept in rigorous order."

"It was all too obvious to have hanged him," said Vincent. "She made him buy the poison, and meant to take it and die, and leave him burdened with the certainty of having killed her. She managed it awkwardly, but came near to success. I suppose her nerve failed her at the decisive moment. He made a narrow escape. I hate murder cases, but this one I should have liked to handle."

I said: "She was willing to die and to punish him, but not willing to kill him."

"What a strange story," said my wife, "and how cleverly wicked the woman was!"

"It reminds me," said I, "of a famous case where a murderer took cyanide to escape the gallows. He killed his mother-in-law."

"Poor maligned mothers-in-law," cried my wife, "much-abused relation; and yet, never before did I hear of one having been murdered. Wives, husbands, even fathers have been poisoned, or what not; but no historic mother-in-law."

Clayborne regarded the gay speaker as if he were considering a grave problem. These half-serious propositions annoyed him. Now he gave it up and said: "English is weak in words of relationship. The wife's mother and the husband's mother are, may I say, officially different. We have for them only the one added phrase 'in law.' What has law to do with the relation? The adjectives 'maternal' and 'paternal' we do not apply here."

"Let us," said Afton, "appoint a committee to invent names for these unlabeled relations. Shall we forever abandon the right to make new words? How free we are in science!"

"Yes," said Clayborne, "and I wish it would keep its own. We are being loaded with abominable terms. English is rich enough. If we could reclaim the words we have lost, that were better."

"Before we go on," said I, "let me say a word of the father-in-law. My friend Captain R——, with two squadrons of cavalry, was cut off and surrounded, during our Civil War, by an overwhelming force of Confederates. When, in mercy, a flag of truce invited him to surrender, he asked who was in command. 'General B——,' was the answer. 'What! My father-in-law? No. I should hear of it till I die.' He cut his way out, losing heavily, and has a handsome lot of scars as a remembrance."

"Were mothers-in-law always in bad repute?" asked Sibyl. "Among those which seem chosen as affectionate relations we are told that 'the daughter-in-law shall be set against the mother-in-law,' as if that were uncommon."

"A neat defense," said Mrs. Vincent.

"But, meanwhile," said Afton, "we are losing Dr. North's story."

"It is not," said I, "one which supports the common belief. He, my present murderer, killed his mother-in-law, not for hate of her, but to get money. It was greed, not hate, which supplied the motive. He was convicted, and the day before his execution killed himself with this same drug, the cyanide. The interest of the story lies in the way he obtained the poison. He was, of course, watched with care, as it was known that he meant to take his own life. He complained that the print of a Bible given him by the chaplain was too small, and asked to have one from his own home. A friend was allowed to bring it. The soft blank leaves were saturated with cyanide. Who did this was never known. The condemned man rolled up one of these leaves into a pellet, put it in his mouth, drank a little water, and fell dead."

"How horrible!" cried Sibyl. "And the Bible of all books!"

"Yes," said I.

"And now," said Afton, "I must go."

"But come again and tell us more stories," said my wife.

"You should leave us with a promise like Scheherezade, or with a half-told tale like him 'who left half told the story of Cambuscan bold.' Alas! too many have left us tales half told. I will go with you to the gate," I said.

But when I rose Vincent would also go with us,

and then the women, because the moon was up, a great, ruddy pearl, over the mainland. Clayborne, being thus left alone, tardily followed, and, very merrily disposed, we went across the damp grass under the thin-leaved apple-trees to the road. When half a mile away, Mrs. Vincent assured us that we would be unwise to escort Dr. Afton farther, as it was quite too large an honor. Laughing, he left us, and we sat down on the roadside, while my wife and Vincent climbed up on to the top rail of a fence. Presently Sibyl began to cap verses with my wife about the moon, and after a few minutes' chat we heard some one say it was damp. This was Afton.

"I concluded that you would not go home at once, and as the dew is falling, that it would be cowardly not to share the imprudence of agreeable people."

Afton's return was hailed with pleasure. He was reminded by Mrs. Vincent of the peril of such returns, and of what happened to our friend C——; but she declined to explain. It was worth telling, I said, but that I, at least, never would tell it. Afton said that was personal cruelty.

Clayborne had rather reluctantly gone with us, and was seated silent by the roadside on a rock. Now he rose. "I am going home," he said.

Mrs. Vincent broke out into song, which, as Alice used to say, always tamed him. He sat down again. Then from the top of the fence Alice said: "Now, some one tell us a story."

"I know one, such a nice one," said Afton, "about a man who was married at one time to two wives, but was innocent of bigamy."

"Delightful!" cried Mrs. Vincent.

"But I will never tell it," he added. "That is my revenge. Good night."

"Sometimes you people are quite unbearable," said the scholar, "and I am very damp."

We went home, Anne Vincent singing as we went, and we in the intervals guessing as to how, innocently, a man could be the husband of two wives—for, as Afton assured us, it did happen.

XXIII

TWO days later we sailed in Vincent's yacht around the entire coast of Mount Desert Island. Mrs. Vincent, who hated the sea, preferred a buckboard drive to Somesville with Sibyl. We started very early, but were delayed on our way because Clayborne desired to go up Somes Sound that he might see the Jesuits' well and the meadow where the earliest French settlement was made. Thus, despite favoring winds, it was near to dusk when, on our return, we walked up the grass slope to Vincent's house.

"By Jove! Vincent," said I, "there is Xerxes."

It was true. Large, in spotless white flannel, the big man was comfortably seated on Vincent's back porch, smoking a huge Cabaña breva. What Vincent said is not to be repeated.

My wife, enjoying the situation, murmured: "What can Mr. Vincent do now?"

"Hush!" said I.

Mr. Crofter came down the steps in a leisurely way. "A young woman said you would be late, so I guessed I would wait. I 'm right glad to see you, Mr. Vincent, and Mrs. Vincent, I suppose."

I corrected him. "Let me present you to Mrs. North. Mrs. Vincent is not in."

"Pleased to see you," said Xerxes. "It is rather curious we should never have met."

Vincent was coldly polite. The others spoke to him in turn.

Said Xerxes, as we went up the steps to the porch: "Thought I would wait for you outside. Don't you find it rather cool here toward evening?" He spoke as if he were receiving us as guests.

To this Vincent made no reply, except to say, "Mrs. Vincent is away." He was in the temperate zone of mere civility.

I passed on into the house with my wife, leaving the others on the porch. "Oh, if only Anne Vincent were here!" she said, quivering with suppressed laughter.

"The man has a talent, Alice. He can forget. Can a man forget and not forgive?" For I recalled what Vincent had said to him on a former occasion.

"No. But I wish Mr. Clayborne had heard your remark. He would say entire forgetfulness eliminates the need to forgive, and that you were very near to a bull. Do not leave poor Mr. Vincent alone."

"He has Clayborne," I said.

"Who will be silent—dumb. You know that."

"Very well, dear. Where are you going?"

"I must look after the child, Owen. I will return at once."

She went away by a side door to our own house, which was near by.

I went out again on to the porch, where I found all three men smoking, while Xerxes, quite at ease, was joyfully sustaining the weight of the talk. To my

disgust, he was relating at length the story of our first meeting and that famous game of chess. He told it well, and not to be amused was impossible. Clayborne was shaking with laughter, and Vincent, after a sorry effort to listen calmly, had also broken down.

"And he never told you?" said Xerxes. "Why, I spread it all over the country. It was well worth the price of admission. A right good circus; and you never told it, doc—Dr. North?"

"Never."

"And why not?"

"Because," said I, "I was ashamed; because I beat you with weapons I do not like to use, and because I was not pleased with myself for using them."

In the red glow of his cigar I saw my friend Vincent's face light up pleasantly.

"Well, that is curious," returned Crofter, reflectively. "Can't understand it. I 've done a heap of things in my time, but, Lord! they 're done."

"And so," thought I, "is murder, theft."

Presently we heard the sound of wheels, and a minute later Mrs. Vincent sailed out. There was, in fact, something stately and like a noble ship in her way of moving.

She said graciously: "Mr. Crofter, I believe. I am glad to see you."

She was well pleased. She had been very curious about Xerxes, and fate had favored her. My wife soon returned, and both sat down, while Sibyl dropped into her hammock. Vincent shamelessly abandoned the conversation to the newcomers, and Clayborne said as little as possible.

"You came up in your yacht, I think," said Mrs. Vincent.

"Yes. I am a bit hard up for amusement in the summer-time, since I came East. As long as I had to fight for a living I enjoyed life. Then I took to railroading, and while that was a scrimmage I had a good time. Now I have married and settled down in New York, I sometimes find it dull."

"I should think so," said my wife, sympathetically. "And does yachting amuse you?"

"Yes, as long as there is risk in it. Between times it is poor fun. Now and then I make 'em carry a lot of sail in a big blow. My captain don't like it. I do. You must risk money or life if you want to be happy."

"I hope, Fred," said Mrs. Vincent, "that you will not take to either of these forms of happiness." She was merrily bent upon getting her husband into the talk.

Vincent said: "You may rest at ease."

Sibyl, to my surprise, replied: "I can understand Mr. Crofter's feeling."

"Let me take you all out," said Xerxes. "We will wait for a brisk sou'wester. We will run up to the Grand Manan. I can take you all and make you right comfortable, too."

"Thank you," said Vincent. "My wife never sails, and I have my own yacht."

"Well, it 's an open offer. And talking of risks, off Cape Cod we were running in a gale, when I saw a canoe. We came within a few yards of her. I sung out, and the man in her looked up. It was that free-spoken young man, Saint Clair. I offered to take him

in. I won't relate what he said. It was concise. You know we had a row, Mr. Vincent, and I guess he don't feel we got even. I can't see what vexed the man."

"Perhaps he can," said Vincent. "The point of view is important."

"Well, really. What was it? I like that man, and there was n't a dollar of difference between us."

Meanwhile I saw in Clayborne the usual storm-signals. He moved uneasily in his chair, laid down his cigar and took it up again, and at last said quietly: "It is not easy, Mr. Crofter, to discuss a friend's quarrels, but I believe that, as St. Clair said, you ruined two of his friends. I beg leave to say that, while I thought he should have held his tongue in my house, I did think he had some reason to speak as he did."

I saw Vincent look up at Clayborne. He clearly disapproved of the overfrank turn the talk had taken. In fact, Clayborne was guilty of the very offense for which he censured St. Clair.

"I think," said Vincent, "we had better leave St. Clair to fight his own battles. I should remind you, Clayborne, that it was not Mr. Crofter, but his former partner, who had been in fault."

There was a scarce perceptible pause, and then Xerxes spoke with entire good humor.

"Now, I 'm obliged to you. I was n't in it, but I did n't care to explain. What 's the good? As to Mr. Saint Clair, he is n't altogether incapable of taking care of himself; and, after all, it was more a glove-fight than a blood-quarrel. I suppose, too"—and he spoke with deliberate care—"I suppose, Mr. Vincent,

my point of view and yours may be different. My wife sees that. I do suppose I ask too many questions." As he spoke he looked from us to the women.

"Oh, no," said my wife. "Pray go on."

"Well, Mrs. Crofter says everything is to be had by patient observation. I 'm observing, I 've been observing, but I am not patient."

Vincent began to be interested despite his dislike of the man, a dislike born generations back. He felt, too, that, whether a willing host or not, he could not remain permanently outside of the talk. He said: "Pardon me, but I do not quite understand."

Xerxes, evidently more at ease, returned:

"Well, I was born and raised and fought my way among people, Mr. Vincent, so different from you people that it 's like being in China. I don't mean the heavy railroad men and bankers. I mean people like you and my wife. I like them. I did n't at first. But once I did n't know a chromo from a Constable. I do now. To be plain, I came East, and I wanted human fine arts."

"Human fine arts," murmured my wife, delighted.

"What a charming phrase!" said Mrs. Vincent.

"Yes, ma'am," continued Xerxes, now under way, and habitually accustomed to be heard with respect even where hostility was imminent. "I find difficulties. My wife says, 'Time and patience.' I hate waiting, and I never was patient. A man tells me I had better not just yet be put up at the Hudson Club. Well, that is pretty plain. If I ask men like you, Mr. Vincent, to dine with me, they won't. They won't yet. Of course I shall get on top of it all some

day; but I hate to wait and— Well, things in a way led up to it to-night, and so I just thought I would have it out. Fact is, I don't understand you Eastern people."

It was, socially speaking, appalling. This fearless, rude baron of dubious finance and elaborate railway theft had cast down his glove of challenge before a gentler people than those among whom he had been born. The courage of the man was interesting. His belief that he would be considered was no doubt the result of habit. His feeling that he would be counseled wisely was almost childlike. For a moment no one replied. Clayborne would not answer. I did not want to. Vincent said later, "In my own house, how could I?" Xerxes was quick to note this hesitation. He added, "Perhaps I 'm making myself unpleasant. I don't want to, but I do want to know." The simplicity of his obstinacy was embarrassing. I looked at Vincent. The appeal was honest and of the utmost sincerity. I knew that Vincent must in some way accept its challenge.

He said at last: "Mr. Crofter, I fear that we are thinking more of our own difficulty than of your very natural desire; but—and you will pardon me—I do not want to reply at all; and if I wished to do so, I could not in my own house. I should want a larger freedom."

"Oh, but I don't mind, and, anyway, we are half out of doors."

"You must let us off this time," said Vincent, laughing. "Could we have tea, Anne?"

"Certainly."

She rose and went into the house, while Clayborne said: "We are going to have a change of weather."

I said, "Yes; there is a fog on Green Mountain," and considered an awkward business disposed of. Not so Xerxes.

"I have half a mind to ask the ladies," he said.

What could one do with a man like this? "I fear that we should follow suit," said my wife.

Sibyl had listened to this remarkable talk with silent intensity of interest. She was lying in a hammock under the porch where we sat. Now she rose on her elbow, and, to Vincent's dismay, said: "I will tell you, Mr. Crofter. We think of you as a man who has made an extravagant fortune by means which seem to us wicked. We do not like it. We say, 'Why should such a man think mere wealth gives him a right to take at will an equal place among people of stainless lives, men of honor?' That is the truth, all of it. I do not see why some one should not speak out."

During this bewildering revelation of opinion, Vincent sat smoking furiously, Clayborne smiled grimly, my wife pursued a ball of worsted down the steps, and I sat still.

Xerxes said at once: "You are a brave little woman, and I am much obliged to you. I could argue that question of my wickedness. I don't see it. Suppose we admit it or set it aside. Here I am. I shall get where I want to soon or late."

"That is true," said Clayborne, "you will."

"More 's the pity, you will say."

"I did not."

"No. Well, Mr. Clayborne, here I am, me and my money. I can't give it away. I don't mean to. You 've got me here."

This powerful human machine seemed to think we were responsible for his future.

"Do you really mean," said Sibyl, "do you honestly mean to ask—"

Here Vincent interposed. "Pardon me, Miss Maywood, if I say that all this is to me most unpleasing. What Mr. Crofter does with himself and his property should in no way concern us. I trust he will excuse your freedom and mine."

"But I like it," said the machine.

"I think," said Clayborne, with grim indifference to the amenities of life—"I think that Mr. Crofter has struck upon the opportunity of a lifetime. Let Sibyl answer, even if you and I will not, cannot."

"I am sure it is very interesting," said my wife, with appearance of ingenuous simplicity.

Vincent was furious. He lit a cigar and remained silent.

Sibyl said quietly: "May I, Mr. Clayborne? Oh, I do want to speak."

"Yes. Go on, if Mr. Crofter wishes it. I see no objection."

"Now, that 's all right," said the machine, cheerfully. "You go ahead, little woman. You have a clear track."

"I wanted to ask you if you did really desire a foolish little maid like me to tell you, a strong, successful man, what to do with your life and your gains."

"That 's it. If you say, 'Give away money, help this or that,' I do it—oh, pretty much as my wife says."

"And why?"

"Because she tells me."

"In order to get certain things, to please certain people?"

"It 's about that. What would you do?"

Sibyl laughed. "I never had enough to be troubled as to what to do with it. If I had your income I should give it away, every year, all of it, every cent."

"Would you? Got to protect property with money. Does any one do that?"

"Ask Mr. Clayborne," said Sibyl, audaciously.

"I ask him," he said, turning in his seat.

Clayborne said: "This is an unusual talk. The palace of truth was a trifle to it. Yes; to be plain, I save no income. I used to; now I do not."

"And how about you, Mr. Vincent?" said Xerxes.

"I prefer not to discuss my private affairs. You must pardon my reticence. Miss Maywood's frankness is not to my taste. Let it suffice."

"Oh, that 's all right," said Crofter. "Guess I 've been to Sunday-school to-day. Perhaps I shall repent. But whether or not, I shall get at last what I want. I always do."

"You will," said Clayborne. "I have not the least doubt you will."

Crofter hesitated. Then he swung himself around and put the confiding hand of familiarity on Vincent's knee. My friend stood it bravely.

"Mr. Vincent, you people are not used to men like

me. I am feeling that. I 've made myself disagreeable. I want to say I did n't think any one but me could be hurt by it."

"There has been no harm done," said Vincent, coldly.

"Well, we 'll drop it. Only there 's one thing I don't get clear about. We had it up before at your house, Mr. Clayborne. Miss Maywood talked about men of honor. A man keeps his word, he meets his pecuniary obligations, and then some one says, 'Oh, he 's straight enough, but he is n't a man of honor.' I sha'n't bother you about X. C. any more, but I want to ask my young friend here, what is honor?"

I thought of Pilate's historic question.

"The honesty of a gentleman," said Sibyl, promptly.

Crofter laughed in hearty animal enjoyment of what to us was an awkward situation.

"Miss Maywood, you are as hard to understand as another woman I ask questions of. This beats chess problems, doctor."

"And is not an answer," said Mrs. Vincent.

"Will you smoke again?" said Vincent.

"With pleasure. I went by here to-day on the shore. There I made acquaintance with Miss Mary. After she heard my name, she said, 'Why did papa say you was a plantigwade, and what is a plantigwade?' I had to own up I did n't know. Then the young lady guessed it was a kind of bear, and informed me I had hairy hands just like a bear. I laughed and said people out West used to call me Old Grizzly. Then she said I was a real nice bear, and would I play being bear on the beach."

At this we laughed, relieved by our escape from the dilemma of silence or reproach.

My wife said, "The child was impertinent."

"Oh, no," said Xerxes. "I played bear, I did. I walked on all fours, and I learned that Mr. Clayborne was n't half as nice a bear. I should like to buy that young lady."

"Not for millions," said my wife, gaily. "Oh, here is tea. One lump or two, Mr. Crofter?" And so, after a little more of less perilous chat, Xerxes departed.

"The dinner must be ruined," said Mrs. Vincent, rising. "You men shall not dress."

"Come in, Owen," said Vincent. "If ever you bring that fellow here again, I will—"

"I did not bring him. He came to see you. He will come again. And now"—viciously—"you will have to go out to his yacht and call."

"I 'll be blanked if I do."

"I like him," said Mrs. Vincent. "No doubt we seem as strange to him as he to us. Sibyl, you covered yourself with glory."

"Did I? Oh, dear Mrs. Vincent, I wish I had held my tongue."

"It had been wiser," said Vincent.

"I don't know," said Clayborne. "'Out of the mouths of,' etc."

"So," said Vincent, "St. Clair is on his way north. What an astonishing talk!"

The conversation which Vincent had not without reason called astonishing was more than this, and so said my wife to me that evening. Here was a man

with a large supply of good and bad qualities. Life, as he had used it, had educated and invigorated what was not of the best. It was strange that so much of available good remained. I was inclined to believe that his questions, his new tastes, his wish for some touch of other modes of life, were merely forms of ambition and had behind them no very worthy motive. Alice said it was a wholly uncharitable view, and time would show, because time is a fine diagnostician.

XXIV

THE days went by most happily. In the mornings my book grew under my hands; in the afternoons I went into the woods, or of quiet days took Sibyl and Mary in a canoe and paddled down to Bar Island or farther, returning to meet the sunsets as one sees them nowhere else. After three days the tall masts of Xerxes's yacht were no longer seen above the morning fog. He had gone. Vincent put his head into my little study to announce this fact.

"Oh, I see you are at work. Excuse me, Owen, but I had to tell you. It is a load off my mind. At any hour that man might have returned. He is the most innocently disagreeable rascal I ever saw. He made himself as free of my house as an Irishman's pig does of his hovel. He is an intelligent fool. A fool is always a riddle. I confess that I do not comprehend the man. Sibyl was outrageous, but I was honestly obliged to her. How cool he was! No, I do not think I understand that man. He seems to me so improbable."

"Don't stand there," I said. "Come in and talk. I am unable to settle a question. I shall leave it for to-day. It will simmer in my head, and to-morrow I

shall write it, as a once famous lawyer said, *curente calamito.* Now I am glad of interruption."

Vincent entered and took a seat at the open window. "How beautiful it is, Owen! Why does a fellow like that Xerxes poison it for me? It is like the remembrance of a decayed olive or a too ancient egg. It lingers."

That was like my friend. Some human beings had power to make him feel uncomfortable, to fill him for a day or two with smoldering fires of dull anger. But, as he said, it was only the incomprehensibly disagreeable who annoyed him; the merely unpleasant or simply base who seemed obvious troubled him less, or not at all.

He went on talking. "When a fellow like that man discusses with a sneer what we call honor, good heavens! Owen, it is like a sensual rake discussing some pure-minded maid."

"Is n't that rather excessive, Fred? He was merely curious, ripely puzzled. He did not sneer. How defend honor to a man like Xerxes? How could he comprehend? And, after all, who can define it? Sibyl made a vain attempt. No dictionary could help him, or us for that matter. The fact is, certain words acquire histories, manners, traditions, memories. There comes to be a kind of misty halo about them which defies definition or forces a man to lengthen his definition into an essay. Let us look at the dictionary."

"Or ask Clayborne, which is much the same thing."

When we brought it up that evening, as we sat

under the trees, Clayborne said: "You are right, Vincent. Symonds says—you may recall his discussion of the Italian word *onore*, used in contradistinction to our word—'Honor is that mixture of conscience, pride, and self-respect which makes a man true to a high ideal in all the possible circumstances of life.'"

"Even that is rather vague," said Vincent. "As to dictionaries, there are no perfect dictionaries. There can be none. Words are at the mercy of their verbal environment. A woman's honor; the honor of a gentleman; a debt of honor. Words are like colors: the tints which surround them make or alter their values."

"Yes," said I; "we looked up the noun 'virgin' yesterday. There is no substantive word for a virgin man."

"That is sadly significant," said Vincent. "Ah, here come the ladies!"

We were at this time on the lawn after dinner. As they approached, Mrs. Vincent said: "We have been talking trivialities, and guessing at what you were discussing. We heard no laughter. We concluded that it was—"

"What?" said Clayborne.

"We decline to say," said Mrs. Vincent. "What was it?"

"Words," I replied. "We have been listening to Clayborne. I asked him when English writers began to talk of style, when the critic came. I forget all he said, but he recalled a pretty couplet of Chaucer. What was it, Clayborne?"

"Merely this, and I am in doubt just what it means:

> Eke Plato sayeth, whoso him may rede,
> The wordes mot be cosyn to the dede.

But I cannot find it in Plato."

"It admits of more meanings than one," said Vincent. "But before you lecture on it, as you will, let me ask you to repeat your quotation from Temple. We were talking chiefly of definitions of honor, and Clayborne gave us one of honesty as a help. Repeat it, please."

"Certainly. It is finely simple. 'That which makes men prefer their duty and their promise before their passions or their interests.' But as to honor all definitions fail."

Said Vincent: "Does it not come to this? Honesty is an externally available virtue, honor a far more personal and interior thing."

"All our talk of words," said my wife, "ends in a belief that the dictionaries have never yet done justice to the English tongue. I want a dictionary of my own."

"Neither words nor men get justice," said Mrs. Vincent. "Sibyl and I agreed just now that you men are very hard on Mr. Crofter."

"As how?" I asked.

"Oh, you fully realize his bad qualities, and do not consider the life and inheritances which nourished them."

"And," cried Sibyl, "you do not see how much there is of good in the man, nor, perhaps, how inevitable was his career."

"He has good qualities," I said.

"And that," said Vincent, "is cause for regret."

"Regret, Fred?" asked his wife. "Why?"

"Because his good qualities serve to give efficiency to his bad ones."

"I like that," said Clayborne. "But now I am off to bed. I get sleepy here." It was hardly ten, and we were all of us people who were apt to talk at times far into the small hours.

"It is very good for you," said my wife. "Good night." And he left us.

"Thank Heaven, we are rid of Xerxes," said Vincent. "I have been up the road with Clayborne to-day. He begins to talk about a cottage near us."

"Indeed!" said I. "I thought him uneasy here, not quite happy. We had good luck with him yesterday. We rowed down Eagle Lake, walked along Bubble Pond, and climbed the farther spur of Green Mountain. I doubt if ever before he walked as far, or climbed anything except a staircase. He is amusingly proud of his exploit; when I declared myself stiff, he was vastly pleased. The glacier-planed slabs on Green Mountain were really interesting, and when we found a number of deep glacier pot-holes, what the Swiss call 'giant kettles,' he was delighted."

"Like those in the garden at Lucerne?" asked my wife.

"Yes. You should have seen the old fellow's pleasure. There seem to be none elsewhere on the island except on Mount Pemetic, or at least I have found none. Did you notice how greatly he was impressed last night by that fine aurora? When it

grew so brilliant and we heard it, that faint, rustling noise, like the movement of a silk gown, he stood still, more awed than I have ever seen him."

"It is a strange thing to hear," said Mrs. Vincent.

> "The faint, quick, silken murmurings,
> A noise as of an angel's flight,
> Heard like the whispers of a dream
> Across the cool, clear Northern night."

Seeing that Sibyl had strayed away to the shore, my wife said: "Did you observe Sibyl last night, Owen?"

"I did. She walked to the shore, and stood a long while watching the great lances of changing light. At last I joined her. She said it was terribly beautiful."

"All great natural phenomena disturb her, Owen, but worst of all a thunder-storm."

"That is not rare. Like some hysterical people, she can predict an electric storm hours before it comes. I have seen persons—no—one person only, who declared she could foretell a thunder-storm by the odor."

"By the odor—how absurd!"

"No. I have myself several times been conscious of the peculiar smell which is noticeable after vivid lightning; but this was always on the water of a river."

"I never had that experience," said Vincent. "If Sibyl has this power I hope she will predict the return of Xerxes in time for me to escape. There is something elemental, cyclonic, in that fellow."

"He will be here again," I said. "I met him in the village the day before he sailed. He said he had some idea of building here."

"Has he?" groaned Vincent.

"He told me that he had had an agreeable visit to your house," said I.

"By George! he is easily pleased."

"He said he could comprehend Clayborne and the ladies and me, but that you were a bit outside, and therefore, as he declared, 'mighty interesting.'"

"I am much obliged to him. I shall continue a riddle."

"No, you will not. That man has curiosity excited by novel human surroundings. He has energy, force, and brute determination to have his way. He has taken a fancy to you, and he will apply the same vigor and ingenuity to your capture which he used to employ to ruin a road."

Vincent smiled. "He will find me hard. As Queen Elizabeth wrote to James of Scotland, 'I have had of the world much hammering.' Come out for a pull on the bay."

"Very good," I said. "Did I tell you that Afton is coming after dinner to-morrow?"

"No. He is always welcome."

XXV

THE next evening we were again sitting in the long, friendly twilight on the porch, talking little and watching the light of day fade on the hills of the distant coast of Maine. I heard voices, and Vincent rose. The next minute Afton entered with St. Clair, who had met him on the road. While he was joyously shaking hands with us, our little maid Mary suddenly appeared at the door barefooted and in her night-gown.

"I did hear Cousin Wictor"—so she always called him; "I must kiss him good night."

He caught her up and kissed her.

"You must see my new gown," she said. "It is pink." My lady was strong on the matter of dress, and was given to decorating herself and personating older people whom she chanced to admire.

"I have two bears now. One is Mr. Cwofter. He is a real bear. Mr. Clayborne he is only a make-believe bear." Upon this she was promptly consigned to the maid and sent to bed in what our young folks call a gale of laughter.

"Has Xerxes been here?" asked St. Clair.

"Oh, yes," said Mrs. Vincent. "He is all my fancy painted him, and more. I think he must have prof-

ited by his visit. Sibyl Maywood discoursed to him on the moralities."

"Oh, Mrs. Vincent!" cried Sibyl. "I had to say it —I—"

"Well, and what did you say?" said St. Clair.

"Tell him, Sibyl," said my wife. Whereupon she rather shyly narrated our interview with the great man.

"Thank you, Miss Maywood," said St. Clair. "I am sorry I was not there. I could have imagined what you all said or would not say. As to my row with Xerxes, I am rather indifferent now; I never can keep a vendetta up to the scalping-point. Everybody asks me about it. Once a week some newspaper chiffonnier adds it to his rag-basket of insolent personal gossip. I suppose I made a fool of myself. The worst of being a fool is that experience is of no use. If any of you speak to me about Xerxes I—"

Said Clayborne: "My dear Victor, El-Din-Attar once wrote: 'When thou hast dined at the Inn of Folly do not dispute the bill.'"

"I do not," said St. Clair. "I came away with a sweet temper, and, by George! not the whole Atlantic can keep us apart. His confounded yacht nearly ran over my canoe. I said in his native dialect unrepeatable things."

"So he told us," said Sibyl.

Vincent smiled. "He thinks you liberally educated for an Eastern man."

"I am often amazed," said Afton, "at the freaks of the rich. Who could suppose this man would really like the sea or art? I presume a yacht to be

essential to one with his present aims. I do not believe that he really likes yachting."

"He may. He likes all manner of risks," said I. "He is a connoisseur in emotions of peril. Once they were financial. Always that man enjoys danger."

"A museum of risks does not appeal to me," said my wife.

"Well, tastes vary," said Afton. "Nothing is more interesting than to see what the uneducated man likes to do when something releases him from a life of toil."

"Most of them," said I, "wabble on through their days without doing anything, mildly unhappy, or perish of the coarse poisoning of too good a table."

"Men have endless possibilities of enjoyment," said St. Clair. "Once I dined at Pearson's, in the Strand in London, with two English friends, one very fat and one lean. They enjoyed as I did not the turtle soup and their tasteless venison. They drank, with small aid from me, a magnum of dry champagne and a bottle of aggressively strong port. When we had smoked and were about to go, my friends put on their top-coats. Mine was missing. At this time we were standing in what they call the smoking-divan. At last I said to the waiter, 'Here is my card. Some one has, by mistake, taken my coat.' As we turned to go, my stout friend felt in his pocket for his gloves and pulled out a letter. I saw on it Vincent's writing. 'Good gracious!' said I. He had contrived to put on my coat over his own. We laughed at this consequence of a magnum, and turned to go. Then a stout little man in the corner said, 'Excuse me,

gents, but I noticed the gent's coat did n't fit." My friends regarded him sternly. Unabashed, he went on: 'I notices gents' clothes. I am a tailor, but I ain't in business now. I spends my evenin's here a-studyin' of gents' clothes. It don't cost nothin', and it kind of keeps me occupied.' 'Indeed!' said I, and we went out. This was one man's idea of enjoyment. Afton spends his life in studying the garments called character."

"We all do," said Vincent; "and that reminds me. Did you not promise, North, to tell us the story of that famous Chapman murder?"

"How nice!" said Mrs. Vincent. "Next to a ghost-story I like a thrilling murder."

Then we discussed De Quincey and his "Two Famous Murders" until Mrs. Vincent insisted on my story.

"This is a true story," I said, "without any fanciful additions. In the year 1831 lived at Andalusia, in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, an old clergyman named William Chapman. Late in life he married a woman who was young, clever, and handsome. One day a man called Mina, who said he was a Spaniard, stopped to ask assistance. He was charitably treated and given some temporary work in the garden. Mina was much younger than the clergyman's wife. He was handsome, attractive, and spoke very little English. His account of his family and how for the time he chanced to be without means was plausible, or at least seemed so to these people.

"At this time Mr. and Mrs. Chapman kept with some success a school in which Chapman gave in-

struction to pupils who had defects in speech. Early in May Mina promised Mr. Chapman three thousand dollars for the instruction in English which he desired. The events of this tragedy followed with amazing rapidity. The woman very soon became the prey of this man. On the 16th of May they went to Philadelphia, where Mina personally bought arsenic. On June 23 the reverend gentleman died in great agony, poisoned.

"The story, as it runs on, invites comment. As for motive, Chapman had saved a little money; it was necessary to marry the widow in order to obtain certain possession of this and also of her small valuables. The murderer was reckless. The woman was the slave of a passion for a young and handsome man. The bare statements of the printed trial do not contain all the facts as I remember to have heard them. The murder was carried out with decision and with a certain deliberate care. After buying the arsenic Mina is said to have tested its power. He gave it to a dog, and by multiplying his weight into that of the husband hoped to attain efficiency in the lethal dose. Of this nothing is said in the trial. Several efforts failed of complete success, but on the 23d of June the man died. His death was believed to have been caused by cholera morbus. No active suspicion was aroused. Let me remind you that he died on the 23d of June. On the 26th of June the victim was buried, and on July 5 the widow married the murderer. Before the month was out he left her. The haste of this marriage and the absence of precaution seem most amazing. Mina's

later conduct was as foolish. He wrote to his wife from various places, and at last from Washington. But now the woman, who may have been the confederate in the crime, was undeceived. Lucretia—what a name in the annals of crime!—wrote to Mina a letter of passionate appeal. In it she used a phrase full of peril: 'Mina, when I pause for a moment I am constrained to acknowledge that I do not believe God will permit either you or me to be happy for a moment this side of the grave.'

"The incident which brought Mina's letters to the light of justice is not told in the trial. A Spaniard, whose name was either Minos or something as near to Mina, had committed, as I recall it, forgery. Orders were issued to detain all letters to him. A clerk sent with these, to the Department of State, Lucretia's letter. It was hastily opened and the mistake as to the name observed. It was about to be returned to the post when a junior secretary remarked to his superior that it seemed to allude to a crime. Upon this it was sent to the Recorder, so called, of Philadelphia, whence the letter had been mailed. Here it gave rise to much interest, but seemed to give no needed clue. At last it was resolved to return it to the Washington post-office and set a watch on whoever asked for it. Just here comes in another strange turn of fate. A captain of police asked to look at the letter. 'I know the writing,' he said. He received permission to examine it at leisure. In three days he came again. 'Mr. Recorder,' he said, 'I used years ago to read proof in a printing establishment. We printed a book on

shorthand by a clergyman named Chapman. He lived at Andalusia. His wife copied parts of it. This is her writing. Here is some of the proof retained as evidence of the work done or of a contract completed.'

"A very little inquiry aroused suspicion. Lucretia was arrested and fainted. Mina was caught, and at the trial, for the first time in America, chemical experts swore to the results of their analysis. Arsenic was found in the stomach. And now again fate seemed to set against Mina. No one saw him give the poison. His wife's evidence could not be used against her husband; and, in fact, she too was on trial. No distinct proof existed as to Mina's having bought the arsenic. He had a quite fair chance of escape. At this time Mr. Reed, the assistant attorney for the prosecution, was going into the court-house, when he met a young law-student, Mr. G——. Reed said, 'Come in and see this fellow Mina.' G—— said he should like to do so. As they passed near the prisoner, Mr. G—— said, 'Mr. Reed, I saw this man once, sometime in June. He is peculiar-looking. He was buying arsenic to kill rats. It was in Durand's apothecary-shop.' This evidence was fatal."

"And he was hanged?" said Mrs. Vincent.

"Yes."

"What of the woman Lucretia?" asked Sibyl.

"She was acquitted."

"Oh, she was the worse of the two. I am sure she helped him."

"Many thought her as guilty as he," said I.

"What became of her?" asked my wife.

"She kept, under an assumed name, a fairly successful boarding-school in New Orleans."

"What an interesting tale!" said Vincent. "I wonder what proportion of murders do out."

"You frequently see that the law fails to find criminals." It was Clayborne who spoke. "But, apart from murders thus openly known, there must be many of which no one save the slayer ever knows."

"A famous detective," said I, "told me that one fourth of all murderers escape detection."

"I should think the estimate large," said Afton. "But one must define murder first. What we call murder is not so called in some parts of Mr. Xerxes's country. I saw in a Western paper a 'census of the deaths' which occurred in a county during one year from causes not natural. They were classified as intentional, accidental, and incidental, these latter being deaths by pistol or bowie-knife. 'Intentional' was meant to cover long-premeditated murder. Of this class so many were acquitted, and so many 'mercifully relieved by the sheriff from the possibility of future temptation.' This mode of statement was, I suppose, regarded as what a Western newspaper lately described as 'amusive.'"

"I doubt if the word be needed," said Clayborne, gravely. "Our newspaper wit is bad, because it is so often out of place, so excessive, so persistently funny in the wrong place. The heading of a grave accident is jocose, that of a comic incident is serious. However, Mr. Afton, this is a favored text for our sermons of abuse. I meant to turn the talk a little. There is such a thing among us as humor; it exults in excess,

in extravagance, in exaggeration; but what I want now is to ask you all if humor be not with us a somewhat recent addition to our national characteristics."

Vincent said: "Probably that is true. Before, during, and even long after the Revolution we had the crude fun and hearty jokes of our English ancestry. During that war the songs, broadsides, and so on were certainly not witty, or what we should to-day class as humorous. I have read many. 'The Battle of the Kegs' is by far the best."

"Perhaps they seemed funny then. Tastes change," said I. "There was no 'funny column' in the papers. What humor came later was in the almanacs."

"I wonder," said my wife, "how 'Pickwick' would present itself to Fielding. Would our fun be funny to Addison, our humor such to Sterne or Steele?"

"Ah, if one could know!" said I.

"I think," remarked Clayborne, "it would be possible to discover when the newspaper began to have a comic column, when our peculiar humor was born."

St. Clair said: "The books are easily found. I mean those which especially represent our life under humorous aspects. Sam Slick is the eldest of the family; but that was a Canadian product."

"I have played a little," said Clayborne, "with the idea of writing a history of wit and humor."

I saw my wife give a side glance of amusement to the address of Mrs. Vincent, who had half turned with a like critical purpose. The notion of a book on humor by this scholar struck the two women as unspeakably diverting. The thing being past human

power to talk about calmly, they smiled with gentle unanimity.

St. Clair said: "Why not do it?"

Clayborne went on gravely: "One must consider the quality of wit, humor, fun, among barbarous people, among the classic races, the rise of these forms of human statement among civilized people, the relation of wit and humor to genius, as to what feeds and what discourages national wit and humor, biblical jests."

"In a word," said Afton, "the psychology of the comic historically considered."

"But to do that," said St. Clair, "one should sit in judgment on the wit, humor, and fun of all ages. And no one age would be a competent tribunal for the fun of another; still less would one man be competent. Shakespeare's clowns are not comical to most educated people to-day."

"They are to the gallery," said I, "and are certainly true to their time. I, for one, enjoy them."

"And, pray," said Mrs. Vincent, "would your book consider relatively the wit and humor of men and women?"

"Why not?" said Clayborne. "What two races of mankind differ as much as do men and women?"

"What a droll statement!" said Afton. "You would find it difficult. Women are often witty, but less often humorous, or the productive mothers of that which causes laughter."

"Indeed!" said my wife, with indignation; "and yet they are the mothers of men."

St. Clair clapped his hands gleefully. "A good

defense," he cried, as we laughed applause at her mot.

"We are not to be joked aside, madam," said I. "What woman has written a striking book with humor as the dominant note?"

"I should like to think that over," replied Mrs. Vincent. "I should, I think, conclude that feminine humor is often to be found in books, but that it is of a gentle type, like my dear Jane Austen's or that of 'Cranford,' and that it is more common of late. I shall write to Miss M—— and ask her about it. And by the way, that reminds me, Fred told me, Dr. North, of your continuance of Mr. Xerxes's discussion of honor. I wrote of this to Miss M——, and here is her reply." So saying, she took a note from her work-basket, and read:

"'Although, my dear Anne, as you say, the French word *honneur* and the Italian *onore* do not convey to the Anglo-Saxon mind the idea of our word "honor," I think there is no better definition of it than "noblesse oblige," provided we give to "noblesse," as we instinctively do, the ideal meaning of nobility of character, and not merely the limited French acceptation of the phrase, which, as they understand it, states a principle of conduct based on pride of race, such as almost precludes the idea of individual choice and character. Their motto has the sad, impersonal, fateful ring of an unchangeable destiny, as though one said: "I must be fine whether I will or not, and no one below me can. It is mine inheritance."'"

"And yet," said Vincent, "that has its influence."

"Sadly little," said Clayborne.

"I do not agree with you," said I.

"Nor I," said St. Clair.

"Ah, must you go, Dr. Afton?" said Vincent. "Before we consign our talk to the forgetfulness of to-morrow, let me ask why the Irish poor, who are so witty and so humorous amid their home poverty, lose these qualities as soon as they are set down here in more prosperous surroundings."

"Is it true?" said I.

"Yes," returned Afton. "I scarcely recall an amusing thing ever said to me in this country by the Irish. At home it is constant. Yes, I remember one."

"And that?" said I.

"Oh, I remember that it was amusing. What it was I forget."

"What an unsatisfactory man!" said my wife.

"Good night, Dr. Afton," said Vincent. "Come soon again, and please to bring your memory with you."

XXVI

I WAS annoyed next day to receive a summons to go to Boston. It was to consult in the case of an old friend. For me the call was imperative. I went most reluctantly and was absent four days. It was after dinner on a Sunday evening when I returned. Refreshed by a bath and a change of garments, I supped, and with my wife went out to join our friends on Vincent's porch. I took my cigar and sat down.

"Tell us some new thing," said Mrs. Vincent; "you always have something to tell. We are moldering for lack of contact with the world that moves."

"The mackerel are in the bay," replied Vincent.

Said Clayborne: "I have found the glacier pot-holes on Mount Pemetic."

"And Mr. St. Clair has been angelic," cried Mrs. Vincent. "And now for you. I am sure you have had adventures."

"He always has," said my wife.

"Indeed," said I, "I had one mishap. Near Portland we had a collision, not very bad, luckily. I was standing up in the smoking-car. The glass crashed, the floor was heaved upward, and the platforms were crushed. I was thrown across the cars. No one was

seriously hurt. I had, however, a queer experience. I was very giddy and as if seasick. I sat on the side of the embankment and was given brandy by a young woman with red hair. When, being better, I climbed into the half-wrecked car, I found my bag, but a novel in which I was deeply interested had been lost or stolen. From that hour I have been trying to recall the name of the book or the author. I lost remembrance of much of the story. I remember that it interested me deeply, and that the tale was at a crisis. Then came the crash, and it was gone. No doubt you know that a bad fall or a blow on the head may, if violent, destroy recently accumulated memories."

"We have talked of this before," said Clayborne. "It seems as if when the memory acquires what I may call, in photographer's language, a negative, a period of undisturbed quiet is needed to develop it into permanence."

"That is a happy illustration," said I, "the idea of a memorial impression being like a photographic negative. Then when we wish, the consciousness creates a positive."

"Unless," said Vincent, "a shock or what not has injured the negative image."

"I think this time my negative got broken," said I. "I can recall nothing of my lost book. As an experience it entirely suffices for me."

"Ah!" cried Mrs. Vincent, "this is all very interesting to you and Mr. Clayborne, but as for me, I remember nothing, and I still await the adventure."

"I had no other adventure. You are hard to sat-

isfy. I did have two interesting talks. Shall I tell of them?"

"Of course," said Vincent.

"I met a man from Boston on my way southward. It was he who was interrogative, and not I. In fact, I was cross and not in a mood for conversation. However, the man was persistent and asked questions. I told him a good deal about war and other matters. When he learned that I was a doctor, he laughed and said he was more used to quacks. On this I in turn became curious, and, on frankly asking, learned that he was called a promoter. It seems that there are many varieties of this animal. My traveling companion was a person consulted as to the probable success of novelties in the way of quack remedies. Will they sell? How much money will be needed to test commercially the credulity of men? Advice is given as to the name of the new pill or potion. Alliterative labels are best. What he called 'freak' names are desirable. He was proud of the K. K., 'Kolic Kure,' and of the 'Health Hoist' tonic. About one in a hundred of the quack medicines has any success, and the cost of advertising is immense. His career at last interested me. He began his business life as a boy in a drug-shop. When about twenty he saw an advertisement asking for new modes of catching the ear or eye of the public. I shall try to let him tell it in his own way. 'I was pretty smart, doctor, and I set to thinking it over. Oh, mostly the notions I got on to were right good, and the thing kept me alive. When I made the great stroke on the S. S. I was set up for life.' 'The

S. S.?' I asked. He seemed a little mortified that I should never have heard of this achievement. I have seen famous authors who have felt a similar sense of disappointment as to their books. The S. S., it seems, was a brand of cigarettes. The letters stood originally for Schlief & Son. He said: 'I saw these people and showed them my idea. There was to be a blank card in a black envelop. "*S. S. Try to guess,*" was printed in gold on it, and below, "*Open this and keep card in a warm place, and then you will know.*" The thing is to make folks curious. You print a placard upside down or spell a word backward, and every second man will be mad to read them.' 'That is true,' said I. 'Go on.' 'My envelop did the trick. Everybody warmed those cards. As soon as they were hot out came, "S. S. stands for *Sin Segarettes*, because they are so pleasant." Oh, it sold 'em. After a bit I did verses for the cards. It was a simple chemical trick. The verses came out when you heated the cards. Later on I hired a poet. He makes now about five thousand a year. S. & S. tried to get verses out of the real swell poets. I did hear they offered Lowell a thousand for ten verses about tobacco.'"

"The story is true. He told me so," said Vincent, "or at least that he had once been invited to do this kind of thing."

"What an opening!" said St. Clair.

"As a curiosity-trap," said Mrs. Vincent, "S. S. seems to be admirable. Who would not take the bait?"

My account gave rise to a long talk about advertise-

ments, and at last to a long and learned lecture by Clayborne on advertisements in Rome and Greece. I saw my wife yawn behind her fan, but Sibyl listened with rapt attention.

Mrs. Vincent said, "Excuse me," and leaving us, went indoors and ordered tea. When the servant announced it and asked should he bring it out to the porch, we, with one accord, rose and went in, declaring our thirst, and that it was too cold outside. The last I heard of the essay was something about advertisements of Greek slaves, and then Clayborne, who liked archæology well, but tea better, followed my wife. These spoken essays were rare penalties of friendship.

After cups enough to have satisfied Dr. Johnson, and big enough to have shocked the female taste of his day, Clayborne resigned himself to thought and a cigar.

A little later Mrs. Vincent remarked: "We are to have the Rev. Mr. L—— next Sunday."

"English, is n't he?" asked Vincent.

"Yes. He worships Gud," said I.

"We had a man last week," said Sibyl, "who prayed to Gawde."

"He is an old acquaintance," said my wife. "He knows that he drawls out 'Gawde,' and once defended it to Mr. Vincent, assuring him that it was more respectful than to say 'God.' But in fact few clergymen can say 'God,' or ever do. In England men worship Gud or Gawde."

"Your Mr. L——," said I, "who is to preach here must be the very pleasant clergyman with whom I talked on the steamboat. He is rector of a church in

Nova Scotia, and had been on a visit to Boston. He was on his homeward way, and, I suppose, has been asked to preach here. I found him very agreeable, but not in the sense of agreeing with me. Far from it. We differed on nearly every subject we touched. When the steamer stopped at, I think it was Rockland, Mr. L—— and I were on the upper deck, quietly enjoying the fine scenery of the islands about us. I saw come aboard on the lower deck three young men, probably clerks or baggage-agents. One sat down on a barrel and lit a cigar. The three were evidently discussing some very exciting matter. Just before the plank was removed a rather older man came on board. He went at once up to the group. I shall call him A. He said in an angry voice to No. 1, 'You lied to-day.' No. 1 said, 'I did not, and you know it.' Then said A to No. 2, 'You are a liar, too.' 'No,' No. 2 returned; 'you are the liar, not me.' Lastly A said to No. 3, 'You are the worst liar of the lot.' No. 3 got off the barrel and knocked down A."

"That is pretty nearly an adventure," said Mrs. Vincent. "Do tell us the rest."

"A got up and walked away."

"But how mysterious!"

"Yes. I learned later that the younger men had been that morning witnesses in a lawsuit against A, but what about I do not know. My clerical friend had looked on with curious tranquillity. I said: 'Mr. L——, which of the three did the right thing?' He replied: 'That depends on the cause of the quarrel. Certainly he who struck was wrong; but I am always distressed to find that I sympathize more than is right

with violence. I was long in the army. I became convinced that all war is wicked. I left the service of the Queen.'"

"I am sure, Owen," said my wife, "that you set to work to bewilder that man about war."

"I did."

"You ought to be ashamed."

"But I am not. I merely reported my honest convictions."

"But why bother a soul at rest with your uneasy convictions?"

"I had to say something."

"Well, if that is your only defense, I am at one with Alice," said Anne Vincent. "Men are never at rest about their beliefs, and go about to trouble quiet-minded folks."

"I was not very wicked. I had to defend my opinion. The man said that no man who was a Christian could believe war to be right. He made the usual commonplace statements as to turning the other cheek and offering non-resistance to violence. I said that war, like personal violence, was only justifiable in cases where law was not available and a great wrong was being done. My clergyman declared this to be against the teaching of Christ."

"Of course you went further," said my wife.

"I did, and this was what shocked the man most. I said that Christ gave to his disciples certain rules of conduct, and that these were clearly meant for a chosen few."

"That is Mr. Clayborne's exegetic thunder," said Vincent.

"Or some one else's," said I. "But no matter. It is true. It did not, as I see it, include entire non-resistance, for that would put an end to order and to progress. The most remarkable praise which fell from Christ's lips is given to a professional soldier. Nor is he told to sin no more or to give up a wicked business. When the man Christ drove out the money-changers, it was with violence, not by acting through a miracle, but as a man using righteous weapons. Was there no resistance? Is it likely there was not? The soldier, we are told, was to be contented with his wages. He was not to quit the business of war. Let me defend myself further. If the commentary of common sense be refused an opinion on the ethics of Christ, we meet with certain disaster. The charity and moderation of his opinions are best represented in the few verses which follow, in St. Mark, his decree as to divorce. This is a brief summary of what I said. I declared at last that if our creed made all war, personal and national, an impossible thing for an honest follower of Christ, I should cease to rest quiet in the church. After I said this Mr. L—— remained a long time silent. Then he said: 'I left the army because it seemed to me a wicked profession. I was better fitted for it than for the pulpit. I wish I could have felt as you do. Oh, long ago I was a pretty good centurion.'"

"Ah, I am sorry for him," said Sibyl.

"And I," said Mrs. Vincent. "That Roman officer is pretty convincing."

"It should not need argument," said I. "If ever you and I, Vincent, served God well it was in those

bitter years of war, and I told the man so. He said: 'I am glad not to have had that trial. We must go our own ways. See how differently you and I regard a grave question.' After this he was silent a little while, and then added: 'Christianity has many labels, but how vast was that personality from which such numberless forms of belief have claimed descent! I sometimes think that the Christ will outlast Christianity.'"

"And what did you say, Owen?" asked my wife. "I hardly understand his last phrase."

"Well, I said nothing, or nothing relevant, because just then I burned my finger with a match, also a shower drove us in, and, between fire and water, the talk broke up. I hope I did not annoy him."

"You can be very positive, Owen," remarked my wife.

"I asked him to dinner, Alice."

"Owen thinks that covers many sins. Will he come?"

"No, he could not."

"Well, it is bedtime," said my wife. "I hope he will revenge himself in his Sunday sermon. The other cheek of logic is never turned. What is it, Sibyl?"

Miss Maywood detained them, saying: "Oh, talking of quarrels, that reminds me to tell you something which Mr. Afton—Dr. Afton, I mean—told me of a woman he knew, a maiden lady who was deaf and dumb. He said she was a person of remarkable education and of singular gentleness. She was one of a family of strong, vehement people, who held diverse

opinions as to religion, politics, and much besides. They quarreled endlessly, and had it not been for Miss C—— would have been long ago hopelessly separated."

"And how," said Vincent, "could a deaf-and-dumb woman influence such people?"

"That was the curious thing. They all loved her and all respected her. To be able to talk with her they had learned the finger sign-language. None of them used it very readily. When she observed them to be in one of their heated talks she began to speak with her sign-language. Its use was for them such a deliberate matter, so much more tranquil and slow than speech, that the discussion inevitably cooled, and ended by every one getting quieted."

"How delightful, Fred!" said Mrs. Vincent. "Suppose we introduce that into the acrimony of our household debates."

Vincent smiled, but said nothing.

"I am glad that Sibyl kept us up," said my wife. "It is very early."

Every one laughed, and we all sat down.

"Suppose we send up," said St. Clair, "and fetch down Clayborne. This promises a discussion which may easily become historical. I affirm that to be entirely silent is the best mode of keeping the peace. It is my sole chance."

"Oh, no," cried Sibyl. "What is, what can be, so exasperating to the other people? The deaf-and-dumb talk seems to me admirable. But perhaps they have—oh, perhaps they bite thumbs at one another."

"And to shake your fist," said Vincent, "is expressive."

"Ah," cried St. Clair, "of all the eternally silent people I want to chat with, there is one—"

"Only one?" broke in my wife.

"Oh, this one never spoke. She was born—I may assume that she was born; certainly she was named. Of all a delightful company who talked a great deal, she alone said nothing. I can see her, and twice her name is used. She is tall, stately, middle-aged, and forever merely a name. She slips away unheard, with her finger on her lips."

"What a pretty riddle!" said Mrs. Vincent.

"Who is it? Who can it be?" cried Sibyl.

"Guess."

"I know," said Vincent.

"Well?"

"Imogen, Leonato's wife, the mother of Hero."

"Of course," cried Alice. "The mother of Hero. How dull of us! It is in 'Much Ado about Nothing.' Was she a printer's or player's mistake? Did Shakespeare mean her to be in the play? Did he forget her?"

"Who knows?" said St. Clair. "When I found this mother of Hero in an old folio, she went with me silent through the play, broken-hearted for her child's sorrows. Let no one disenchant me concerning this immortal silent one." He went on: "The modern editors left out the name of this neglected lady—at least, Rowe and Pope did, and every one since. I made a little verse about her."

"Well," said my wife, who had listened silently.
"This is it," said St. Clair. "Please to like it.

Immortal shadow, faint and ever fair,
  Dear for unspoken words that might have been,
Compelled to silent sorrow none may share,
  A ghost of Shakespeare's world, unheard, unseen.
How many more, like thee, have voiceless stood
  Uncalled upon the threshold of his mind,
The speechless children of a mighty brood,
  Who were and are not! Never shall they find
The happier comrades unto whom he gave
  Thought, speech, and action; they who shall not know
The end of our realities, the grave,
  Nor what is sadder, life, or any human woe."

"Thank you," we said. "Thank you."

"That was your riddle," cried Sibyl, "Shakespeare's dumb child. What a pleasant thought to take into sleep!" She had listened intently, bending forward, a little flushed.

"Thank you," said Mrs. Vincent to St. Clair. "Is that all?"

"No, but I forget the rest. The wind-up is commonplace."

"Ah," said Sibyl, as they rose, "where now are the thoughts which Shakespeare never put in words? Does thought ever die? Where are they?"

"In dreams, no doubt," cried my wife, laughing. "Let us go and find them. Good night, everybody."

XXVII

ST. CLAIR went and came, but appeared to me to avoid being alone with Miss Maywood. When together in the company of others neither he nor she seemed to afford occasion for comment. But it was hard to say what might chance with a man like Victor. He might be entirely convinced of the wisdom of a course, and then of a sudden startle one by some contradictory action.

Late one afternoon, when all but Sibyl and this writer had gone on a long walk, I strolled to the beach, and met Sibyl coming up from the slip. Her gait had never been that of a strong woman, and now, as she came near to me, I saw her sway a little and then stop and lean against one of the old apple-trees.

I turned and said: "Take my arm, Sibyl. What is wrong with you?"

"Nothing; I am not very strong. I want to learn to paddle a canoe. Mr. St. Clair said he would give me a lesson. We were out only a half-hour."

"It was imprudent. St. Clair has no sense."

"Oh, but he was most interesting."

This seemed to me an odd reply.

"But, really, you should—"

"Yes, I know. Was I very naughty?"

"You were."

"I am very tired; I think I was born tired. Even to talk long with you tires me. But Mr. St. Clair does tire me most. If I am very attentive, that is worst of all."

I left her at my own door and went back to find Victor.

To scold him was useless. He had now the child-like look of one expecting to be blamed. I pleasantly surprised him by saying:

"And did Sibyl learn to paddle?"

"No. When we came in she asked me if she had done well. I said yes. Is not that droll, Owen? She had not touched a paddle. We were out two hours. I merely showed her how to paddle."

"Two hours?"

"Yes."

As I went in reflective, I heard St. Clair call. I turned back.

"Owen, will Miss Maywood ever be well—and—and strong?"

"I do not know."

"I never asked before, but she is so frail and so dependent that one naturally—well, you understand."

Victor rarely lacked for words. I said yes, of course we all felt as he did.

I was perplexed by her account and his, and inclined to think there might be less occult and more obvious reasons for the weakness which I had attributed in part to mysterious causes.

The weeks ran away, and I still believed I saw the influence of St. Clair's presence on Sibyl. Again I

talked to my wife about it, and although she still doubted my explanation, she saw very plainly that without apparent cause Sibyl was failing. I began to feel that some prolonged separation was needed, and at last said to Clayborne that I thought he must take his cousin to Europe and let her have the benefit of the Schwalbach Spa. I also did venture to say, what was true, that she was keenly inquisitive, actively intellectual, and was and had been in a society too stimulating to be borne by one who was mentally eager and physically feeble. When I said that our talk left her exhausted, I saw by Clayborne's look of astonishment that I had been wise to go no further. It would indeed have been useless to have stated to Clayborne my suspicion that what I called to myself latent affection and also influences more mysterious had a share in making mischief. Of love-affairs the scholar knew little, and as to the rest, he would have smiled at an opinion so incapable of proof.

The physician is credited with want of faith in things spiritual. The charge is common and has classical support, and yet of all people he is the one most often called upon to think and act with decision in cases where action must rest on incomplete knowledge. He moves amid mystery. If he does not intellectually respect the complex riddles of soul, mind, and body, and their interdependence, he is unfit for the higher seats in the temple of the god of medicine. When I supposed that the mere presence of St. Clair was hurtful to Sibyl, I was face to face with what was to me a fact. We all tired her of late, but this other influence was more mischievous. I could not prove it; but every

day I was acting on beliefs which no man could entirely justify by proof. I must put my conclusion on ground where Clayborne and others could stand with me. This is a common experience with the best of my guild. It is the power to reason from uncertain premises to conclusions as often unsure that makes the best physician. He practises an art not yet a science. It is based on many sciences. A man may know them all and be a less skilful healer than one who, knowing them less well, is master of the art to which they increasingly contribute.

Clayborne was much alarmed when I thus reopened the matter of Sibyl's health, and at once declared himself willing and ready to go in September. It was now August. The summer had been most fortunate. I had finished my book; Clayborne had nearly completed his own task; all had gone well with us. Except as to Sibyl, I had no care; and, as Vincent remarked, to complete our good luck the great Xerxes had stayed away. Fate, which had dealt kindly with us, was about to give us a taste of the perverse possibilities of life.

One fine day in mid-August we arranged for a picnic on Otter Creek. Every one went except Mary, who, to her disgust, was left behind, but was told that she might fish from the rocks in the afternoon. With a final caution to the nurse from my wife, we drove away in our buckboard wagon. Five miles of very bad road brought us at noon to where the Otter Creek, now in full flow from recent rain, crossed the road. A walk of half a mile took us along the stream, among gigantic masses of tumbled granite.

We settled down at last by a clear pool. Here Clayborne, Vincent, and my wife left us to climb the hill, that Clayborne might revisit the glacier pot-holes. The servant busied himself with the lunch, put the wine to cool in the brook, and St. Clair wandered off through the woods. I sat down to keep Sibyl company, together with Mrs. Vincent and Dr. Afton. We were silent awhile, and then Mrs. Vincent said: "We seem not to be in the mood for talk. I am not. Tell us a story, Dr. Afton. I am like a child about stories. I should always prefer to hear rather than to read them."

Afton said: "Wait a little, Mrs. Vincent; I must search that index called memory." After a little he said: "My puppets are off somewhere on a holiday. I am storyless. Now, if Mary were asking me with those seeking eyes, I should find them a tale at once. I not only like to tell stories to children, but I delight in stories about children. When my new book appears you will see what a diligent collector I have been."

"What will you call your book?" asked Sibyl.

"'The Wit and Wisdom of Childhood,'" he replied. "And will not you contribute, Mrs. Vincent?"

"I think not," she returned.

"Oh, but I will tell you a story," cried Sibyl; "and such a pretty story, oh, a mere bit of a story! I heard Mrs. K—— tell it to Mr. Clayborne. Once she was at L—— in the Berkshire Hills, and went with the S——s to see a model village school. The teacher, very proud of it, said: 'Now, children, we shall have silence. While no one speaks you must think, and some one of you shall tell me what his thoughts are.'

There was quiet for a while, the teacher explaining, in an aside, that this plan led to introspective originality. Suddenly a small boy rose, lifted his hand, and said, 'Please, ma'am.'

"'Well?'

"'Please, ma'am, may I kiss the new girl?'"

"How pretty!" said Mrs. Vincent. "It sounds a bit like Concord and that amazing man Alcott, who had a school at G—— for a time. He began school, one day, by opening a blue cotton umbrella over his head, and asking the children what idea it suggested."

"What answer did he get?" said Afton.

"Ah, that I do not know. One does want to hear what came after, and, indeed, what came after the famous retorts, the memorable bons mots."

"Nothing comes," said Afton, "except laugh or wrath."

"Oh, I suppose not," said Mrs. Vincent. "I envy the ready people. I am never ready."

Sibyl laughed. "Oh, Mrs. Vincent!" Few were more apt at the quick rapier play of talk.

"It is true," said she. "I look before and after, and pine and pine for what is not. I know next day what I should have said. What is that Spanish proverb St. Clair quotes? The French saying is better, but every one knows that."

"Yes, yes," cried Sibyl; "this is it:

> 'T is only fools who borrow
> Their answers from to-morrow."

"That is not bad," said Afton; "but I should put 'the wise' for 'fools.' Silence is often a fine epigram."

"I must tell Fred that," laughed Mrs. Vincent. "When, last year, we were talking of this matter, Mr. Clayborne quoted—I think it ran this way:

> If to be silent is to be wise,
> Then hath death the best replies."

"That is quaintly unsatisfactory," said Afton; "but you have it wrong. Pardon me:

> If the best wisdom doth in silence lie,
> How wise is death, that maketh no reply!"

"Death is a grim question," said Sibyl.

Afton looked at her gravely.

"That reminds me," said Mrs. Vincent, "of what my husband said the other day, after we had talked of men who wrote verse when about to die. He said something as to the way in which humor showed itself even in the last hours of life. Have you, Dr. Afton, ever seen that?"

"No, never."

Then I said: "I have; but if it be to the sayer always what it seems to the hearer, I do not know. In fact, I have seen it often. I once attended a circus clown who was dying. A Methodist clergyman present said to him, 'My friend, you are very ill. You have led a bad life'—which was too true. 'Think of yourself.' The poor fellow had been worrying about his children. 'What will you say to your Maker when he asks you of your life?'

"'I guess I 'll say, "What can I do for you next, Master Ringmaster?" Guess he 'll know a circus ain't a church.'"

"Is that really true?" asked Sibyl.

I said: "Yes; and so is this. A man dying on the field of Gettysburg asked me where he was hit. I said, 'In the liver.' To which the volunteer replied: 'I might have known that. I always did have trouble with my liver.'"

"Was that humor? I suppose not," said Mrs. Vincent; "but how to classify it? Was it simply humor? Was it, for the man, a mere statement of a fact? Was it self-felt, intentional humor? My husband tells a charming story of the famous lawyer Mr. M——. He was slowly dying day by day, and well aware of it. His doctor said, 'Did you take the pill?' 'Pill?' said the sick man. 'My daughter gave me two.' 'A harmless mistake,' said the doctor. 'Well,' said M——, 'it is only another example of female duplicity.' The next day the doctor chanced to see on the mantel-shelf a bottle of German spa water with some unpronounceable name. 'For whom is that, Mr. M——?' he asked. 'Oh, Mrs. C—— sent it to my daughter. She takes it.' 'But why?' said the doctor. 'Oh, to improve her German accent, I suppose.' 'Her German accent?' 'Yes; the taste is so damnably pronounced.'"

"That is quite perfect," said Dr. Afton.

"I forgot that you were the physician, Dr. North," said Mrs. Vincent.

"Yes, and it was like the man. He was full of those queer verbal surprises."

Then said Sibyl: "How curious to be talking human wit in this wild woodland! How little it suggests that!"

"How little!" I said. "As little as the approach of death would seem to suggest or permit the mere play upon words. Ah, here is Mr. St. Clair! And what have you seen in the woods? We are talking bons mots."

"I have been better employed. I saw a wildcat."

"Oh!" exclaimed Sibyl, looking about her.

"I watched him long. He had glorious eyes."

"Did he come after you?"

"No; we interviewed each other ten feet apart. I know what he thought."

"Oh, Mr. St. Clair, what was it?"

"I neither print nor relate my interviews, Miss Maywood. I am not of the tribe who do. He was a gentleman. He followed me a little way. Then I said I was otherwise engaged, and he left me."

"I trust he did not find Fred," said Mrs. Vincent, smiling. "Ah, here they are!" And so presently we were gaily lunching.

After luncheon I said I would leave them and walk home, as I had some proof to read and send away. I left St. Clair puzzling Clayborne over a novel theory of glaciers, invented on the spot.

The road was lonely. Here and there it dropped into deep valleys, with small regard to the convenience of man or horse. Glad of my lonely walk, I went on amid a moldering company of red-oaks and vast pines left to rot at ancient ease. All around were the young generation of trees. Off the road to the right was a hillside of rocks in rough cubes, like huge dice tumbled from the summit of the mountain. The desire to struggle up this gray and not attractive rubbish came upon me. I stood awhile

to see how best to do it, and then went on. A little farther the road dipped nearly to the level of a bog, meant to be a lake, but fallen to the low estate of a morass fertile in due season, a mass of unattainable lilies and somber cattails. Here again I made a halt, and saw how the maples, which love water fringes, were predictively suggesting the scarlet and gold of autumn. Then I wandered off the road and around the marsh. Strongly set in some natures is the desire to go where one cannot, or to win the unattained, or to get the useless and difficult. I stood thinking why the deadly peril of this marsh tempted me. I tried it for the lilies' sake, and went back to the road, convinced by wet feet. I fell to thinking, and of all things away and apart from the place I reflected over a therapeutic problem which had often puzzled me. For me to walk greatly prospers thought. It was so now. I found what I wanted; but with me such conclusions stray easily from my memory; I must insure their lives by instant record. I rose well pleased. Then I was aware of St. Clair coming swiftly through the wood and hailing me.

Seeing my muddy foot-wear and the bunch of brown cattails with which I was fain to be content, he said: "In England they call those things reed-mice. I am glad you got no lilies. I was ashamed to tell Mrs. North what Ruskin says of folks who plunder gardens or raid the woods for wildings: 'Luxurious and disorderly people rejoice in them gathered.'"

"What stuff! A good rose lasts as long in a glass on my table as in a garden. I like to see it unfold to matronly maturity. I like to see the change as its red

shadows darken. I like to see it let fall its leaves on my table, over the books."

St. Clair had a pretty charm as a listener, and an air of gentle attention which at times was very taking. He was interested, and forgot his critic mood.

"Ah, if the decay of life were beautiful!"

"And," I said, "you, a poet, do not see that some lives are truly like this." He sat beside me, silent. I turned to look at him. "Well?" I said, interrogatively.

"Nothing," he said, "nothing."

His eyes were full of tears. I stood up. "And so you, too, ran away," I added.

"Yes, I deserted. I wanted to get home early. I have to finish a sketch I began yesterday. The weather and light are much the same as they were when I began it. Besides, Clayborne was lecturing on the ethics of history. In a forest like that! Conceive of it, Owen. I told him he should make it a chapter of his book on humor. Do you know, dear old fellow—to speak English as she is spoke—railly—that 's any amount more critically expressive than 'really'—railly, he asked me, 'Why?' Oh, he is as simple sometimes as a lumbering old box-turtle. Mrs. Vincent shook her head at me. Miss Sibyl looked cross and then puzzled. I left. The way those women spoil him!"

"What did he mean by the ethics of history?" asked I.

"You are inconsiderate even to ask the question. I came away disgusted. Here comes nature, sets her scene with a perfect day, leads you into the woods, gives you a brook for chorus; and a man knocks

out all the poetry with an essay on—what was it? Thank Heaven, I have forgotten it! Don't tell me, please. Oh, ethics of history! And the dear people jibed me about the wildcat."

"You saw one, Victor?"

"I did. I was like a child, afraid to tell all. No one ever believes me. I will tell you."

"Please do."

"When I saw that cat I got on my hands and knees and crawled toward him. Also he crawled. When I got within two feet of him he began to wink. Then I knew he was afraid. Oh, what golden eyes! Then I put out a paw and smoothed his fur. After that he lay on my lap, and we talked."

I had not the least doubt as to the truth of what he now told me.

"Did you hypnotize him?" I asked.

"No. Perhaps. How can I tell? I have no fear of wild things. I never tried a lion. If Xerxes were really a beast through and through I could tame him."

"That is the worst of this world," I said. "Men are losing their instincts, and not getting brains fast enough to supply the loss of animal talents."

"I should like to have Xerxes in a menagerie. He does look like a bear, and he has not one complete beastly quality."

"Well, he is being tamed, Victor."

"Yes; he will become uninteresting, like all tame things. His yacht came in to-day. Fred will be pleased."

"Will he not? His capability of being seriously

annoyed by a man like Crofter is strange to me. You would have been amused at that visit. Vincent was quiet, dignified, and, as usual, tranquilly well-mannered. You know his manners have no accent. I wished you had been with us. To us who know Vincent well it was a delightful encounter. The gentle, scarce obvious self-restraint was clear to see. It was lost on Xerxes, not on us."

"The scamp! Ah, if he only knew, as I do in my small way, the satisfaction of feeling that, if not yourself good, you are the cause of good in others! What with Xerxes and Clayborne, I have lost half a day. I came out of the wood with my head full of verses about my gold-eyed cat, and there were the ethics of history, and now you and Xerxes."

"How delightful," I said, "to have the crude stuff of poetry in your mind and to watch it take shape! Does it grow like a child? How do fellows make poetry? The embryology of a poem has always been to me more of a mystery than any other mental process."

We were now seated on the roadside, the sketch forgotten.

"We once before discussed it, Owen. If one had all the copies of one great poem from the initial thought to the final verbal touches we should know more about it. After a poem is born it has to be educated. All verse worth writing at all costs labor, in some cases very great labor. Its primary conception and birth must always remain mysterious. But of this be sure, Owen, that, as with a foreign tongue, one must think in it, so with poetry: if a

man does not think in rhythms he is not a poet. And if he be ever so much of one he is little wanted nowadays. Fellows write to me and send verse. 'Will I kindly criticize and return?' I write—"

"You do really answer?"

"Yes. I write: 'Do you think in rhythms? If not, you had better retire from that business; no one wants it now, bad or good.' Fools like me will go on scribbling verse. The love of verse is lost out of the life of the time. It never was in our life as it was in Elizabeth's day. Imagine the President or our English ambassador winding up a state paper with a sonnet."

"Who ever did, Victor?"

"Some one; I forget his name. But come along, Owen, or I shall lose my evening light."

By five o'clock I was at my own door. Mary was on the rocks, deluding small flounders. I saw St. Clair hurrying through the orchard to the eastern side of the projecting promontory which here divided the beach. Pleased to have a tranquil afternoon for revision of my book, I went up to my study. My wife by no means allowed afternoon work, but that lady was in the woods listening to the ethics of history. I pulled my table to the window and began to read my manuscript. Below me the old apple-trees gave glimpses through their gnarled limbs of the sunlit sward. Standing out to the north and breaking the beach-line rose a short headland, rocky and bare, and not over twenty feet high. Below it on one side was a level ledge of rock some six feet wide. Here, above the sea, which was breaking on the rocks, I

caught sight at times of my little maid's yellow locks and of the woman in charge sitting near by. St. Clair was on a lower ledge to the southeast, on the other side of the headland. Presently, as an apple-tree swayed in the wind, I saw on the summit of the rock a bulky figure. To see better I moved to the next window, and, as it was quite four hundred feet away, caught up a field-glass to make sure. It was Xerxes. St. Clair had approached the rocks from the farther side. I could not see him, but I knew exactly where he was sitting, and that he must be unaware of the fact that Xerxes could look critically down on him and his work.

With this comical situation in full view I gave up my book and went out on to the upper porch. Here at the western end I could see better all concerned, or unconcerned, except St. Clair. Mary was the most patient of fishers, because if the fish were on her hook or not seemed of no moment. She went on intently fishing and making no noise. Mr. Crofter, ignorant of being spied upon by me, enjoyed the situation. I could see him smile. He was of no mind to disturb the fisher or the painter, upon whom in turn he looked down. I could see his liberal grin as he inspected St. Clair from this vantage. Then he turned and watched Mary. She stood or sat on the ledge of rock, and now and then freely refreshed her bait with lavish addition of clams as the bare hook came up after having regaled the much-comforted fish, who were the supes in my little drama. Suddenly Crofter had a mind to smoke. He gave it up either because, again, of absence of matches

or because he was unwilling to risk the betrayal of a situation which he evidently enjoyed. I laid down my glass, and having no such fear of consequences, I lit a pipe. A little later I went in and got a stronger glass; then I sat down to enjoy this comedy.

I cannot quite disentangle what next I saw from what I afterward heard. The little maid was quick of ear. Hearing something, she jumped up, and suddenly was aware of her friendly bear overhead. I heard a cry of warning from the nurse. Mary backed a little, the better to see Crofter. She cried out, "Oh, Bear, Bear, come down and fish!" and put her foot behind her where no rock was. She fell backward into the sea, and in an instant was twenty feet away. Before I could throw a leg over the rail of the porch I saw Crofter jump down some ten feet on to the ledge below. As he alighted he slipped and fell heavily. He rose at once and threw himself into the sea. For the time I saw no more. I dropped on to the grass below me and ran down through the trees. I saw Crofter, a rod or so out, trying to reach the sand-beach. He held the child clear of the water, and seemed to me to be in some way disabled. St. Clair, a wonderful swimmer, was helping him toward the strand.

"All right," he cried, laughing, as he caught sight of me. "A hand, quick, Owen."

I ran down the beach, and wading into the sea, caught up the child; then I offered a hand to Crofter. "Can't," he said; "something 's broke."

In a moment both men were ashore. The infant cause of this scene was crying lustily and very wet; the nurse was making a noise larger in proportion to her

size. St. Clair was laughing and shaking the water from his coat, like a wet dog. Xerxes was standing still, looking at the maid, and saying at intervals, "Damn it, don't cry." He had a cut over his left eye, and his right arm hung helpless. To add to the dramatic effect, my wife was running down through the orchard. Vincent, far behind her, was tranquilly talking with Afton, not yet having seen or guessed our nearness to a tragedy. There were scant words of quick explanation. My wife seized the scared child and ran with her to our house, declaring that I ought to be ashamed, and that she would never leave her again, and where, indeed, had I been? Mrs. Vincent went with her, too wise to try to set her right at the wrong moment, but, as usual, silently efficient. Miss Mary was put to bed, and leaving the mother, Mrs. Vincent went over to her own home to ask questions. Fred, coming out, met her.

"You cannot go in yet, Anne," he said. "Yes, it is simple. This is all of it. Mr. Crofter was up on the top rock when Mary fell in. In place of scrambling down, as any sensible man would have done, he jumped the ten feet, and of course slipped, and fell on the ledge. He put his shoulder out of place, and cut his stupid head; but somehow he got into the sea and fetched up your godchild, who was in the condition of Ophelia as to appetite for water. Then St. Clair, who was in the side scenes somewhere, entered, to left, I believe, and he, too, went into the sea. He had all he could do to get the crippled bear and Mary into shallow water."

Anne Vincent said sternly: "Fred, I—never heard

you so—I am ashamed of you. I see nothing amusing in it."

"Nor I, you dear goose. Confound it, Anne, sometimes a laugh is the only escape from tears. Get the blue room ready. Mr. Crofter must stay here, I suppose."

"Of course; where else should he stay? A year, if he will."

Vincent reëntered the room to aid me in the easy task of replacing a simple dislocation of the shoulder. It was brief in the doing, but painful. Xerxes bore it well. Then I sent Vincent to my own house to get the needed dressings for the cut on Crofter's forehead. At last, his arm in a sling and his head neatly bandaged, I left him that I might take a look at my child. While he was being put to rights he scarcely let fall a word, except to say, "Is that all right?" or, "Don't be afraid to hurt me."

On my way I met Clayborne and Sibyl, who had lingered in the village and walked home. They were the last to hear of our disaster. Sibyl turned pale and went hastily toward my house. Clayborne asked me if he could be of any service. When I said no, and that everything had been done that could be done, he went in silence to his own room.

I found the little maid quite recovered from her fright and disposed to turn the matter to good account, realizing her recent increment of importance. "Might she have two cakes for tea, and was the bear very wet?"

As soon as I had left Crofter he said to Vincent: "Is the kid all right?"

"Yes, yes," said Vincent. "There is no cause for alarm. But you are not to talk. You have had a bad fall." Vincent was in a condition of mind for which no previous experience could have prepared him. He himself did not want to talk, but the big man was not easily kept quiet. As he lay on the lounge he regarded Vincent with a succession of serene smiles. At last he said:

"You 're awfully fond of the kid."

"I— Yes, of course."

"You 've got to like me, Mr. Vincent. Fate 's a right tricky bronco. I guess she has bucked you bad."

"I rather think she has," he said frankly. "I am eternally in your debt, Mr. Crofter."

"Receipt in full," said Xerxes. "Where 's that Indian, Saint Clair? He 's on top this time. Between us, Mr. Vincent, that beach was miles off when he got hold of me. I was swimming sort of crab style, sideways, a bit dazed, I guess, head turning round. Could n't I see that young scalp-hunter?"

St. Clair, satisfied as to Mary, had promptly disappeared. Vincent, pleased at so good an excuse to escape, said: "I will find him, but you are to keep quiet. Mrs. Vincent will have a room ready at once. The child's mother will want to see you in a few minutes."

"All right," said Xerxes. "You find me the young man. I want to thank him. I want to get it over. I hate thanking people. So do you, I guess."

Vincent winced. It was true. He had a well-

marked dislike to being thanked. Now, relieved, he went out to look for St. Clair. Not finding him, he found himself obliged to come back. Then he discovered, as I had also done, that Xerxes Crofter had departed. We learned later that on the road he met what folks at Bar Harbor call a "cut-under," was driven swiftly to the village, went on board the *Night Hawk*, and was away in an hour, with all sail set. When we missed him my wife declared war on all the male sex. We might have known what he would do. Plainly, Mr. Crofter was unwilling to face the gratitude of a mother. She supposed we had never said a word to him of our boundless debt, and now just to patch up the poor fellow and let him go! We explained in vain. As to Vincent, he was slightly ashamed at his satisfaction in Xerxes's flight. "No one could have known he would go," I said. Mrs. Vincent said his flight showed remarkable delicacy of sentiment. He did not want to be thanked. But, really, we could not let him go in this abrupt way. I said the abruptness was his, not ours. My wife considered me with grave severity.

"You must find him, Fred," said Anne Vincent.

"And you, too," said my wife. "Where is Mr. St. Clair?"

No one could say. Clearly, it was not a male day, and we knew it. We passively obeyed. It was too late. Crofter had gone when we reached the village.

At dinner we assembled as usual; for we dined together on alternate days, and now it was at the Vincents' house. Sibyl, my wife said, had gone to

bed much overcome and, as I knew, a little hysterical. Clayborne had learned of Crofter's disappearance. The new situation in regard to Crofter did not call for prolonged discussion, but we all knew that we had contracted a heavy debt. Vincent was indisposed to talk. When I said I would write to Crofter, to my surprise Clayborne said that he had already written, and had sent his letter to the village to catch the Portland mail. He had heard that the yacht would put in there. Upon this my wife said Clayborne was an angel, and informed me with decisiveness that I should have shown similar good sense. When I said I would write as soon as dinner was over, Alice said: "I must see your letter, Owen, and I shall write one myself."

St. Clair was silent, until at dessert he got up, exclaiming, "By George, it is maddening! Here is Xerxes my friend for life. I shall have to apologize and make more busts, and, great Scott!—" With this, feeling that language was useless or inadequate, he went out and took to his canoe.

Next day, to my surprise, Sibyl came down to breakfast, which of late was rare, and before the meal was over the Vincents and St. Clair came in to ask news of Mary, who was still in bed.

"I am going away to-day," said St. Clair.

"You are going to New York," said my wife.

"I did not say so."

"No, you did not, but that is where you are going. Here is a letter which my Mary insisted on dictating. The signature is her own. Please to deliver it for me."

"Oh, read it, do!" said Mrs. Vincent. Whereupon we had the letter.

"'DEAR MR. BEAR: My mama says I may thank you. I did not know bears could swim. I hope you got dry soon. Come soon and play bear. Bears are nice people. I have to stay in bed. Are you in bed? Mama says I must say now

"'I am yours truly,

"'MARY.'

"When," added Mrs. North, "I asked, 'Is there anything else you want to have me write?' the dear child said, 'Please say, "I prayed God to make you and me good bears."'"

"You put it in?" said I.

"I did, of course."

There was silence for a moment, and full eyes. Then St. Clair said: "Mary may prove a good moral missionary for the old pagan."

"Victor!" exclaimed Mrs. Vincent, sternly.

The culprit smiled. "You will see that I am right. Saith El-Din-Attar: 'Successful virtue flatters the soul of man.'" Then he added irascibly: "It is all very well for you people who have never been insulted by this amazing animal. But think of me. I must eat the pie of humility, and I am going to do it now, at once; but truly life is very unsatisfactory. A sorrow's crown of sorrows is—well, is to be the dog on top and to be muzzled. Come, Owen, let us smoke. There is a time for that, although the sage Ecclesiastes does not mention it."

As we rose Mrs. Vincent and my wife assured him that nothing justified the manner in which he permitted himself to speak of a man who had saved Mary's life.

"It is my final snarl," said St. Clair.

"Well," said Clayborne, "it does seem to me that Victor had some share in the matter."

"As if we did not know that!" said my wife. "I think I made that clear to him. I can never, never forget, never."

"Oh, please not!" cried St. Clair. "Come," he added gloomily, "come, let us smoke, Owen."

In the evening St. Clair left us, but what he said to Crofter I do not know.

The next morning brought us this characteristic letter, written on the yacht and addressed to my wife:

"DEAR MRS. NORTH: You will desire to know from me just what happened yesterday; and, luckily, my left hand is in good state. I can manage to scrawl letters with it. I walked to your farm, and, as no one was in, went to the rocks and got on top. Miss Mary was there already, fishing. Later on Mr. Saint Clair arrived on the other side of the rocks and sat down under a projecting ledge. I could see his sketch and his hands, and, as he was twenty feet away, I watched him with my glass. It is a first-class sketch. I mean to have it; tell him so. Between the two, I had a right good time. Then the kid fell in, and I jumped and fell, but I got into the water. The nurse howled most usefully; an engine danger-whistle could n't beat her. I was thrashing

round like a lame duck when Mr. Saint Clair caught me. I held the maid, and he held me. I guess he never did suspect he 'd be that affectionate. We got out, and you know the rest. I do suppose I have n't often given people large occasion to thank me. Come to collect interest on that debt, and I could n't stand it, especially the mother. I left. Tell North I am all right. Got a right nice little doctor on the yacht. He always consults me as to what he shall do. Tell Miss Mary the bear sends his love and seven nice growls. Mrs. Crofter is on board and desires me to send you her apologies for my rudeness in leaving you. I do. XERXES CROFTER."

This odd letter was duly answered, but what my wife said I do not know. Also other letters passed, but neither was I let to see any of these.

Early in September Clayborne told us that, as I had advised, he was going abroad at once with Sibyl. No sooner did St. Clair hear this than he said he, too, was going. He had returned long before from New York, but declined gaily to relate his interview with Crofter; and now he said he was going with Clayborne. I was too wise to tell him why he should not. He knew the very obvious reasons against it, and I had no mind to do more than to repeat what it did seem to me any man of sense and feeling should have at once decisively felt. And still, despite Mrs. Vincent's words, and what my wife added, he continued resolute to accompany Clayborne. It was unlike him. He rarely resisted when we all held an opinion contrary to his own. At last my

wife again took the matter in hand. She had agreed with me that it would be cruel and unwise to use as a motive the strange view I held as to his mere presence being hurtful to Sibyl. She said to me at the close of a long and anxious conversation: "I mean to talk to him to-morrow." What passed I do not know, but he told me next day that the only true art in a debased world was that of Japan, and that the degenerate artists of Italy, like Da Vinci and the rest, were as mere groping children. He had told Clayborne he could not go with him. I was greatly relieved. Soon after Clayborne sailed St. Clair went to California. What had my wife said to him? Our friends went away early in September, leaving us somewhat anxious. Until the day he himself left, Victor was quiet, and, for him, depressed as I had never before seen him. Sibyl, no doubt, felt keenly the separation from the two friendly women who had learned to love her. She said little, but, when finally it was decided upon, her eyes showed that she had indulged in the comfort of tears. Now, at the moment of departure, as had occurred at other times of trial, she showed unexpected fortitude. As I looked at the face she turned back when they drove away, I saw its paleness, and knowing too much, paid the sad penalty of knowledge. It was not, however, a case for despair, and I said so to Mrs. Vincent. I was not without hope—the gentle guest who lingers last, reluctant to depart.

We remained at Bar Harbor long after Clayborne and his cousin had sailed, and saw no more of St.

Clair, who followed them to New York on his way to California. I recall our last afternoon on the island. Vincent had been called away on business. For three days a fierce east wind had been blowing. The storm broke at noon. The sun came out, and we decided with one voice to spend the afternoon at Great Head. On that high headland we found a dry, rocky camping-ground, and leaving the servant to get the tea ready, we went up on to a side rock to watch for a while the march of the waves still rolling landward from the sea. The child sat on my lap, and looked with wondering eyes on the billows, as they rose, ramping up the black rocks, and broke in a wild roar like lions disappointed of their prey. We too sat silent, awed by the spectacle of this incalculable force. At last a larger wave sent over us a shower of spray. We retreated to our tea-camp, and threw ourselves down on the cushions we had brought. Behind us the far cliffs of Newport, the Beehive Hills, and the higher slopes of the larger mountains were masses of red and gold, with here and there somber contrast of dark-green pine and spruce.

"Ah," exclaimed Mrs. Vincent, sadly, "the fall has come. I do not like the season, but I do like our word, the fall. It seems so prettily to predict the spring. How beautiful it is!"

"Indeed, I wish it were spring," said my wife. "The birds are leaving us. They, at least, are sure of endless spring. What are those lines, Owen, St. Clair liked to repeat?"

"You mean about the cuckoo? Logan's or Mi-

chael Bruce's? I certainly think them Logan's 'The Cuckoo's Return in Spring.'

> What time the daisy decks the green,
> Thy certain voice we hear;
> Hast thou a star to guide thy path,
> Or mark the rolling year?

And then, I forget the rest, all but:

> Thou hast no sorrow in thy song,
> No winter in thy year."

"I did not know the lines," said Mrs. Vincent. "We could not well afford to lose these minor poets. Just think what a tender little thrill of pleasure it gave us all, this small voice out of the last century. It makes one think of Victor. You said you had a letter from him, Alice. It is now six weeks, and we have not had a line from any of them, except that brief note to say that Sibyl had been the better for the voyage."

"I have one from Mr. St. Clair and one from Clayborne," returned my wife. "They came just as your buckboard drove up for us. Here they are. I left them unopened until we could read them together."

"And there are none for me?" said Mrs. Vincent. "He should have answered me about the curtains in the red room."

"I am sure, Anne, that is a perfectly simple thing. Why should you plague the man about his curtains? You will hear soon, I am sure; and if not, what does it matter?" she added, amiably contented, while Vin-

cent's face suggested an immature smile, and I replied in kind.

"Victor writes: 'I sail for Japan to-morrow. I stayed a good while in Salt Lake City with the Mormons, in a Mormon house. The man had modestly contented himself with four wives. One, he said, was a fine cook. One was the intellectual wife, and doctored the family. There were lots of books about. One wife was a really good musician, and one was young and very, very pretty. It seemed an intelligible arrangement and worthy of imitation. He calmly ordered "either dear charmer" away at will, which seems agreeably to dispose of a difficulty. I did not venture to raise the question of multiplicity of mothers-in-law. Artemus Ward is not used as a classic in their public schools. If you read Artemus on Mormons you will know why. I went from home a much-disgruntled man. I am not sure I was wise to go away, or at least to the Eastern world. I should have gone to Europe with Clayborne, who never scolds me, and who accepts me as I am. I had better have gone with them and faced—'" Here my wife stopped and became slightly embarrassed. "The rest is rather personal," she said. "I shall not read it. What does Mr. Clayborne say? I gave you the letter, Owen."

"Yes; shall I read it aloud?"

"Of course."

It was like all of the scholar's epistles, brief. I have known several great talkers who always wrote condensed letters. He spoke cheerfully of Sibyl, and thought Schwalbach had been and continued to be

of use to her. She was forbidden to write. Her extreme pallor had left her, and she had now a pretty color which went and came.

There was pleasant comment on the good news of Sibyl, and I read the postscript: "'I am more troubled here than at home, because, among this mass of strangers, now and then Sibyl overhears things she had better not. Yesterday some one said: "What a pretty girl! Pity she is so crooked." I was with her at the time, and observed how it hurt her. You know how strangely keen is her sense of hearing.'"

"My poor Sibyl," said Alice.

Upon this Mary expressed herself in this wise and with much emphasis:

"Sibyl she did tell me cwooked people could never mawy. I heard papa say Cousin Wictor he was vewy cwooked sometimes. So, mama, if bofe was cwooked—"

Here mama thought fit to check this small disposer of fate. Mary replied: "But I can't help finking, mama."

We laughed and went off to the cliff edge again, and had our tea and cigars, and waited, stilled by the thunder voices of the sea. By and by it fell dark and darker, and then the heave and tumble and crash of the billows became glorious with phosphorescent lights, the fireflies of the ocean, and this was the last of a too eventful summer.

I asked my wife no questions as to the part of St. Clair's letter which she would not read aloud. We both held sacred the secrets of others, and felt that the union which seeks too completely to merge two individualities into one does not fitly represent the

ideal republic of marriage. However curious I was, and I am an intensely curious man, I asked no questions as to the matter.

And yet I was very curious. I was still more so when, two months later, Mrs. Vincent, coming in to afternoon tea, said: "I got this envelop from St. Clair to-day, from Burma. I suppose it was intended to inclose a letter. There was nothing within it. Is not that like him?"

A week later this lady showed my wife a short note from the poet. It said merely that he wanted to apologize for having failed to inclose the letter, and to add that he was very glad he had so failed.

"And now," cried Anne Vincent, "I shall never see it. What could he have said?"

"I do not know," returned my wife.

"Of course not, dear; but you do want to know, and it was very like him and very exasperating. He knows perfectly well how much I dislike these mysteries to which he treats us now and then."

"It was a quite natural accident, Anne, to leave out his letter, and, for my part, I often wish I had never written some letters or had neglected to inclose them. I do not think he should be blamed for so common an accident."

"My dear Alice," said her friend, setting down her tea-cup, "since Victor helped to save my godchild you flash up at the mildest comment on this riddle of a man. I cannot be wholly deprived of the privilege of abusing my friends."

"As much as you please, dear, but not to me, and not St. Clair or my dear bear."

"Well, my love, I promise, and I do understand. You must know that."

Vincent came in at this moment. He had been absent for a week.

"How pleasant to be here once more! Crofter has built a steam-ark of unheard-of dimensions. I had to see it, of course. He sails for Europe in March. Mrs. C. has selected the animals. They represent finance, family, and fashion. I told him we really could not go, and now he wants Clayborne and Sibyl for a summer cruise in the eastern Mediterranean."

"Oh, we ought to go," said Mrs. Vincent.

"Well, I shall not interfere. Go by all means."

Of course we saw more or less of Crofter and his very pleasant wife. Sometimes, it is to be feared, he did not consult her tastes or ask her advice.

When Christmas came arrived a gorgeous pearl necklace for Miss Mary. My wife put it away, and the young lady did not see it for many a year.

"It is too absurd," said Vincent. "What can one do with a man like this?"

His turn came next day. Crofter sent him two thousand cigars. Vincent groaned. I laughed and said: "Whom the gods of finance love they overwhelm with many gifts. He has sent me a priceless Horace, an incunabula. I tremble to think of the cost."

"And me a ruby," said Alice, "and I am very much obliged to him. He gave me back my child. What is a ruby!"

"You need not smoke the cigars, Fred," said I.

"Thank you for sage advice."

"My wife," said I, "has asked them to come over

for a week. You will dine with them on New Year's day."

"Certainly. Anne cynically advises me to burn the cigars. I suspect Mrs. Alice of that mild jest. I shall accept the counsel. Anne says men are incomprehensible. And the moral of it all, Owen?"

"Good gracious, Fred! How do I know? Will this run of gifts go on?"

"I," said Vincent, "have sent him the landscape by Rousseau which he admired. I sent it as from Anne and myself. It was her happy idea. Clayborne will be grimly amused. I wrote him last night and asked him, as I ask you, the moral of this terrible fable of the oppression of wealth."

When this letter was answered the scholar wrote: "El-Din-Attar has somewhere remarked—but perhaps I had better not quote it. One of you would be sure to tell your wife, and then—"

"And he, no doubt, calls that a joke," said Vincent. It was not so considered by the women referred to.

The visit of Mr. and Mrs. Crofter was cut down to three days. In this I recognized Mrs. Crofter's judicious hand. I think Crofter enjoyed most his conquest of Vincent, who during the time of their stay was a source of boundless amusement to Alice and Mrs. Vincent.

XXVIII

THE winter had gone. It was now April. We were sitting before dinner, waiting for the Vincents. My wife, with her feet on the fender, turned to me and said: "Do you remember what you once said as to the mysterious effect you believed St. Clair's presence had on Sibyl?"

"Yes, of course."

"All our letters speak of her as better. Clayborne writes: 'I did not tell you, as I meant to do, that with the return of health and color the halt in her gait is at times hardly visible.' Could that be so, Owen?"

"Yes."

"And about the other matter, will it be the same? You know I never believed it; but, if you were right, could it change?"

"Possibly. The sick and the well are two people. How completely they may be two we doctors alone know."

"Could you have been wrong about it?"

"Yes, I may have been."

"You are a very extraordinary man, Owen North."

I laughed, but had no time to question her as to

this verdict, because the Vincents entered, followed by Afton, whom I had caught on his way South.

We were a very merry party, and the more so because of our letter that day from Sibyl,—in fact, her first letter,—and one from Clayborne. Sibyl wrote simply that her winter in the Engadine had still further helped her, and that for the first time in years she was free from constant sense of weakness. She spoke of all of us, but not of St. Clair. Clayborne wrote that, although she still had the ethereal and delicate loveliness we all knew so well, she was able to drive and to ride donkeys and to enjoy the life of the Alpine winter. "Of course," he added, "she has to be very careful, and always will be unlike other young women."

Afton was good company, and the talk took a wide range, settling down at last on handwriting, as we had been looking over my wife's collection of autographs, which were chiefly family papers.

Mrs. Vincent asked Afton if he believed that character could be read from handwriting.

He replied: "If you give me a number of specimens of the writing of one person—a dozen or so of letters—I can sometimes tell something of the writer's mental or emotional states at the time he wrote."

"But, beyond this," urged Mrs. North, "as to general character?"

"Try me," he said.

Vincent chose for him to read the unsigned page of a rather angry letter from Washington to an officer. Afton said, as he read: "I think I recall this writing. I do not now know whose it is. The man was a per-

"Severe limitation, that, but I accept," returned Afton.

I said, as I rose: "Let us all go into the library and smoke."

When we were thus at ease, Afton said: "This is a family legend, and, on the whole, I would rather not relate a too incredible tale. Will you not ransom me, Mrs. North? Show Mrs. Vincent my opinion as to the letters."

"Not I, indeed. I have what Owen would call your diagnosis. It is private property."

"It is, I should say, a prognosis," said Afton.

"That is better," said Alice, "but we must have the story."

"Well, then, in the year 1839 my father's surviving cousin, Thaddeus Afton, lived near Tracadie, New Hampshire. He was a childless widower, very rich, and of singular character. When he and my father were young they both loved one and the same woman. My father was successful. Thaddeus broke off all relations with him, and they never met again until the time of which I am about to speak. My father, the most kindly man I ever knew, tried over and over to mend a quarrel not of his making and which he honestly lamented.

"In April, 1839, my father was hastily called to the bedside of his cousin. Thaddeus said to him these extraordinary things: 'I have hated you, Harry Afton, all my life. I hate you still. You know why. I have left my whole estate to hospitals. I have made you my executor.' My father said, 'I have enough.' Then Thaddeus returned, 'I am sorry you have. I wish you

No one could for a moment doubt that the new will was in Cousin Thad's handwriting. He wrote a queer cramped hand like old English writing. It was without witnesses, and, oddly enough, had been sanded; for this use of sand Thaddeus always held to."

Vincent said: "Afton, that is the strangest story I ever heard. What do you think? What opinion did you personally form?"

"I formed none. Nor did my father. Was the man not dead when he left him? The doctors decided that he was dead."

"Did he—could he have risen and found an older will?" asked Vincent.

"No; it was dated the day of his death, and he was paralyzed—as to his legs, I mean."

"What," I asked, "did your father do?"

"He refused to take even his legal share in the estate. There was endless litigation."

"The ghostly part of your story, Afton, would be incredible but for the man who tells it."

"I was not there," said Afton, quickly; "remember that."

"No, but your father was. It is inexplicable, I admit that."

"What is of more human interest," said Vincent, "is the enmity which hoped to find your father poor, which desired to disappoint him, and which so trusted him as to make him what one might call the executor of a vengeance against himself. Then, too, the dying man forgives, or says he does, and warns the man forgiven that restoration to health will can-

cel the forgiveness. What a pity the will had not had a few dead witnesses! Imagine the case in court. Of course I can comprehend your father's feelings."

"The estate," said Afton, "was finally divided among a number of distant cousins. My father disliked to talk about it; indeed, he would never do so."

"You have certainly earned our forgiveness," said Mrs. Vincent, "but as to Mrs. North, well, that remains a vendetta."

This was in April, as I have said. Of what was in the envelop Afton gave my wife I never heard a word, nor shall, I presume. In June we went to the island as usual. In July Clayborne wrote that St. Clair had met them in Athens, and that they had given up their return passages and would join Crofter at the Piræus for a cruise in the Ægean Sea.

When Anne Vincent heard this news, she said: "Mr. Clayborne has very little sense, and Victor neither sense nor feeling. I am sure, Alice, that you must agree with me."

This time my Alice only looked at me, smiling, and made no reply to her friend's challenge, except to say: "If, dear, one knew everything, replies would be easy."

Then Anne Vincent said: "Sometimes, Alice North, you are very trying."

To our great regret, Clayborne decided to remain in Europe all winter. Most of the time was spent in Paris, where St. Clair was superintending the bronze cast of his famous group of the Jesuit pioneers for

Montreal. Clayborne wrote rarely, or only on business to Vincent. St. Clair did not write at all, and Sibyl merely very fresh accounts of things seen or heard.

In May we ourselves went direct to Naples for a three months' stay in Italy. We joined our friends in Venice.

XXIX

HEN we came out of the station on to the broad marble quay overlooking the Grand Canal, we saw St. Clair.

"Ah," he cried joyously, "we gave up your rooms at the Britannia. Here no sane man lives in a hotel."

I considered this rather cool, even for an old friend; but Mrs. North said it was delightful, and we went away in St. Clair's gondola, with the baggage and servants in another. St. Clair, laughing, said we were prisoners of joy, and would explain no more. And now it was evening. The sun was nearly down. A dusking, orange haze was everywhere.

My wife had never seen Venice. I knew it well, and then and after had great joy in making Alice know it,—the bits the tourist never sees,—the deep, narrow canals, the archways, where the shadows are centuries old, the cowled monks, themselves like wandering shadows, the ferry to Padua, and Gobbo of the market-place. History here is hand in hand with romance. Rome is my friend, but Venice is my lover.

We were very quiet while the dark gondola swept on through the deepening gloom. When we had threaded many narrow water lanes, and it was full

twilight, we swept out on the broad Giudecca, and turning, stopped at a garden gate.

"This is home," said St. Clair.

In a minute we were in a wide space of trees and flowers. Alice was kissing Sibyl or holding her off at arm's-length, delightedly bidding me to see our Sibyl, if I could, in the slender but quite erect Sibyl with roses in her cheeks.

Clayborne had a look of fresh happiness in his face as he saw our glad surprise. "Come," he said; "dinner will be ready in a half-hour."

Set deep in the greenery of this ancient garden, amid fountains retired from duty and crumbling gods, was this old palace, where we owned for a season the second floor. There are three quiet cities in the world, and if Venice is the stillest, these ancient homes on the Giudecca are of all Venice the most noiseless. Ah, how we wandered in these new surroundings! I frankly enjoyed the vast learning of the scholar, the simple ease with which St. Clair played with his toys of imaginative thought, and the pleasure with which Sibyl used her new strength.

My wife was like a child in her happiness, but I noticed that she was quietly observant of these two very unusual young people. I myself saw nothing remarkable to observe. When I had so said, Alice was much amused.

"Nothing to observe! Do not you see that St. Clair is at times embarrassed and awkward? He is thinking of what he says and does. He never used to do that. You men have been idiotic enough to admit that you do not understand women. It is a

signal evidence of our superior intelligence that as to the riddle man *we* have made no such damaging admission."

Then I began to watch these two people. Victor had a foolish scheme of going by sea in an open boat to Rimini. Sibyl said it would be dangerous. Her boatman had said so. We heard no more of it. When he ventured upon some stringent criticism of Crofter, I overheard her say: "Hush! you will annoy Mrs. North." Our reckless Victor was being tamed.

My wife said: "It is wholesome this time, but perhaps it will come to nothing. We may let it alone. He is getting older and, I hope, wiser; that is all."

Upon this I quoted a posy she had once used and I had liked: "True love is a court fool. He is supposed to be foolish, and is often wise."

As to Sibyl, she was less startling, more self-contained, and evidently had her full share of that notable assimilative power which is the fortunate gift of nature to the American woman. She had won, too, such health as had enabled her to profit by exercise. Her gait was rarely other than that of vigor, and she was assuredly no longer notably deformed. When I came to hear how she had been treated to effect these results, I was amazed at her courage and endurance. Had she lost any of the almost spiritual refinement of her face? I do not know. Certainly there was more of the world in our Sibyl, less mysticism—just enough wholesome change, as Alice said, to make you wish to spell her name in the more modern fashion.

As for Victor St. Clair, he would never be other than a more or less peculiar man; but he had always taken moral color from his environment—not altogether a very fine thing, that, to confess.

There were curious little things chancing at this time, which my wife watched and saw with the interest of a connoisseur. But every man's mind has a blind side, and this was mine. At last I chanced on what did seem to me a strange incident. We had been at evening to the Armenian convent. Here Sibyl had made the acquaintance of a pallid young monk, who showed her, deep hidden in the cloistral shadow of its shining leaves, a huge bud of the greater magnolia. When she asked for it, St. Clair protested. She took no notice of this, and carried the bud away. It was set in a green bowl on the table of our salon. Two or three times a day for two days it partially opened, and then closed as though undecided. Victor told her that at this time of maturing its temperature always rose. I found her sketching it, and, as it were, fascinated. Then at morning she called me. "Come, Dr. North; it is sure this time. It has opened. Oh, it is glorious!"

It was glorious for two days, a wonder of lucent, ivory-like whiteness, perfuming the great room. The next day early I saw her looking with dismay at the faded yellow wreck of its fallen beauty. It suddenly affected her as even far less things had at times disturbed her in the more morbid past of her life.

She said to St. Clair, as I stood unnoticed at the door: "How horrible! It is so deathful."

"I loathe it," he replied. "Why did you bring it here?"

"I was wrong," she said. "Even the odor is dreadful."

She threw up her hands in a rather wild way as she spoke. St. Clair saw something I did not see, as her back was toward me. He said quickly: "Take care, Sibyl, take care; control yourself."

She turned on him sharply: "I am not Sibyl, Mr. St. Clair."

"Ah," he replied in his gentlest tones, "you are not. You were. Was I rude?"

On this she said, as softly, "Pardon me," which, on the whole, seemed to me irrelevant. At this moment I coughed. When I mentioned all this to Alice she said I might have had more tact.

These were happy weeks for our little maid. She sat hand in hand with her adored Sibyl as the gondola shot out under the moon of Venice and wandered among the islands, or else she strolled about afoot with Cousin Victor, and was fetched home loaded with strange gifts. Best of all it was when St. Clair took the bowman's oar and delighted the gondoliers as Sibyl and he sang their own Venetian songs. Ah, brief and happy days—alas! too soon at an end. We had overstayed our time, and it was imperative that I return home. My wife said it was like leaving a theater before the play was over.

We returned by Naples, and went up to our island home, where we found Mrs. Vincent alone. I fear that my friend found me unsatisfactory. I said that Clayborne was well, and Sibyl wonderful, and St.

Clair less of a delightful fool than usual. I thought he was becoming older and more staid. Anne Vincent was apparently better pleased with Mary, who was perilously awake to all that she was meant not to see or to hear. She may have collected facts quite unknown to me. For a day my wife was too busy to be socially interviewed; but Anne Vincent was heard later to declare that Alice North was sometimes inconceivably lacking in capacity to observe. This greatly amused me. To some such charge Alice had replied:

"My dear, there is so much to see in Venice that one hardly notices what one's companions are about. By the way, I bought you the lace, but it was very dear."

Alice likes nothing better than to keep a secret from Anne Vincent. Was there a secret?